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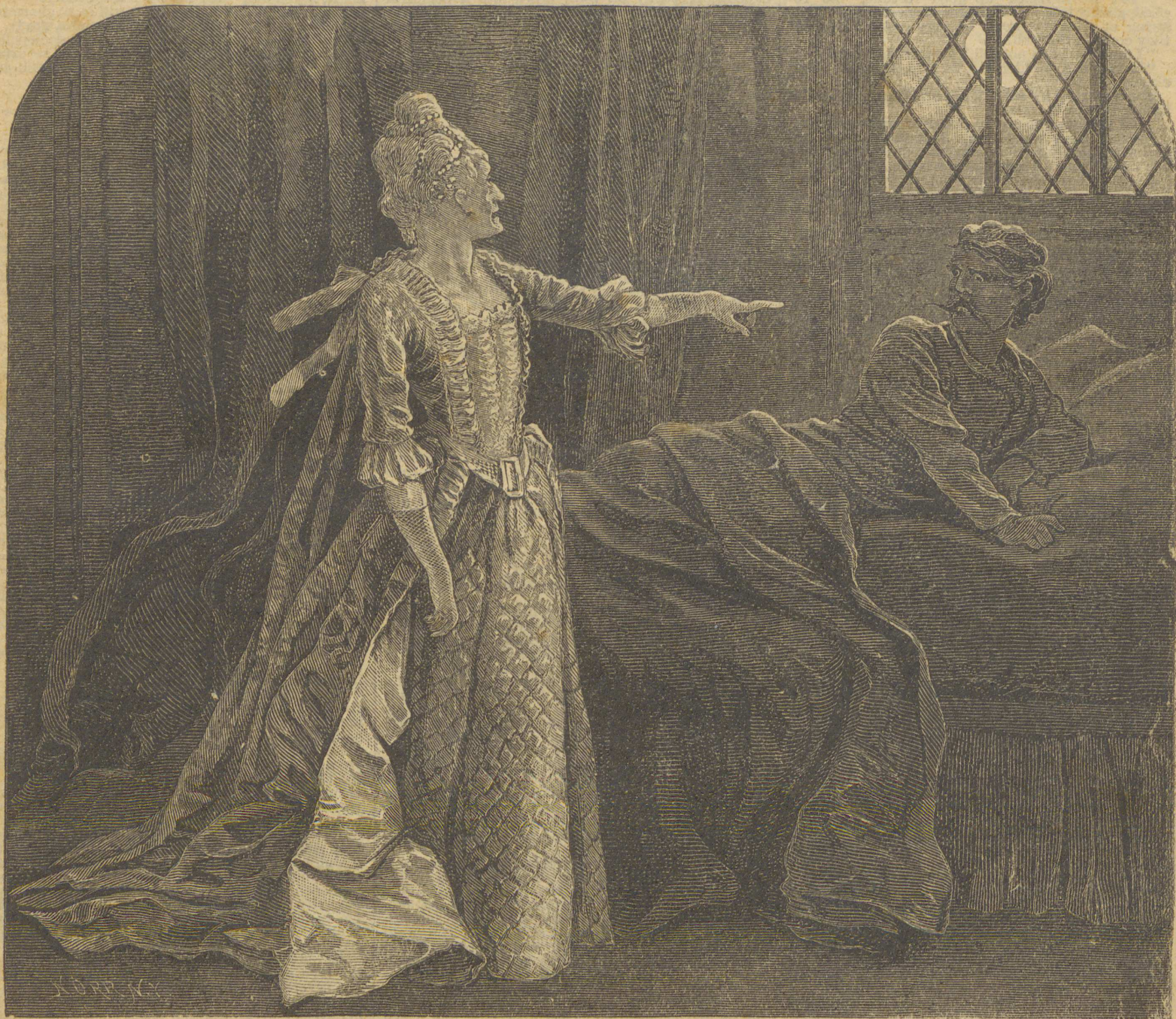
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"UNHAPPY MAN! WHO ART THOU THAT THOU SHOULDST COME HERE TO TROUBLE THE INNOCENT? WAS IT DESTINY THAT LED THEE TO THE WELL AT THAT FATAL MOMENT, TO BLIGHT THE FORTUNES OF THE FAIREST OF THE PERCYS?"

## A Pair of Gray Eyes; or, The Emerald Necklace.

BY ROSE KENNEDY.

### CHAPTER I.

MRS. BUTTERBY'S BOARDER.

A YOUNG man, with an artist's kit swung lightly over his shoulder, went slowly along a valley road, admiring the afternoon of summer gilding the hill-tops, and wondering where he should sleep that night, if he kept wandering on at this rate, further and further away from the

country village whose one hotel held watch and ward over his trunk and box of painting materials.

"I will rest at some farm-house to-night," he said, or thought, "and get up early for a sunrise view."

Lingering along the rustic, seldom-traveled road, he came soon to just such a spot as he would have coveted in which to spend a night in the valley. A stone house, a story and a half in height, with a steep roof running down over a porch at one side, stood in a little wilderness of shrubs and trees. A large yard in front had numberless rose-bushes in profusest bloom, and two round beds of verbenas lying in the bright grass. At the side of the house, opposite the porch, an orchard stretched away to wheat fields ripening between that and the hills. The size of the sturdy apple-trees, as well as the moss upon the roof of the dwelling,



and the sedate and tranquil air of all around, proclaimed the antiquity of the place. Pennon stood a moment to admire the scene, with his hand upon the latch of the gate. Around by the porch the grass was worn with the trampling of feet, and an old-fashioned well-sweep, with an "old oaken bucket" attached, and smooth stones about the well-curb, looked not the least antique and peaceful of the accessories. The thirsty traveler longed to drink from the bucket's brim, especially when he saw a young girl trip lightly forth, and swing it down into the cool depths of the well. He could not see her face, and she did not observe him. Quickly and gracefully she drew the bucket up, peering down as if at her own features mirrored in its waves. Suddenly, while he paused by the gate, she uttered a low scream, the pole remained stationary in her hands, and she seemed transfixed by some unaccountable sight of terror.

Pennon flung open the gate, and hurried through the yard to her side. Just as he reached her she burst into a light, silvery laugh. She was holding up against the warm light of the descending sun a string of the richest emeralds, which glowed and sparkled as they hung tremulous from her hand.

"I thought it was a green serpent when I first saw it," she said, apologetically, to the stranger, whom she at that instant perceived, "and I am so afraid of them. I shouldn't have screamed if it had not have taken me so by surprise."

"You have fished up good fortune," he replied, gazing into her beautiful, earnest face. "That string of emeralds must be very costly. How did they come in the well?"

"I am sure I can not tell," answered the girl.

"It is quite wonderful," he said, scanning them closely.

She remarked his artist's kit, and the air which he had of being a traveler.

"Did you wish to see my father?" she inquired.

"I have been wandering about the country, enjoying the lovely scenery, and have strayed far from the village where I have taken a room," he said. "I thought perhaps the dwellers in this charming place would not refuse me a night's lodging, that I may be able to sketch yonder hills in the mist and purple shadows of the morning."

"If you have walked all the way from Greenville to-day, you will indeed not feel like returning there this evening. My mother is in the house, and papa will soon be here; I presume they will be glad to welcome you. Walk in, sir."

She spoke with as much ease as simplicity. He was charmed with her manner and with her beauty. Both were peculiar, and not of the strictly fashionable mold, but refined, and, he thought, much more exquisite. They had the freshness and sweetness of nature, as if all the quiet and yet glorious loveliness of the scenery about her had made their impression upon mind and expression. She stooped to lift the bucket to its place; and as she did so her dark brown hair swept in heavy curls down her vermilion cheeks, and floated upon the breeze. Pennon thought of Rachel, and wished mentally that he was Jacob. Then he blushed slightly to think that he had already dreamed of kissing that innocent mouth, and reproved himself for his guilt.

"Jacob was sent by his father to claim Rachel, and, being a relative, he had a right to kiss her, I suppose. But this maiden's lips I will not profane by a thought."

"Clematis!" called some one from the house.

"My mother is waiting for the water."

He took the bucket from her hand, emptied its contents into the tin pail she had brought, and carried it for her into the house. There he met a fine-looking woman, still fresh and fair, not quite as delicate as her daughter, but with the dignity and cordiality of an old-fashioned lady. He made his apologies for intruding so handsomely, and his looks seconded his words so well, that she was not displeased to extend her hospitalities to him, though that she would have done to the humblest, for the stone house had sheltered many a forlorn one for more than one night.

And here we will vouch for the truth of his statements by giving the reader a glimpse at our hero, as he sat in his city boarding-house, only four days previous to this, thinking how poor was Mrs. Butterby's best, for which he paid ten dollars a week, compared with "country cream," carpets of grass and flowers, fresh broiled chickens, new-laid eggs, glorious sunsets, dew, distant views, rustic mowers cutting grass, butter out of the spring-house, etc., according to the fancies of city people with which they adorn in their summer dreams that otherwise dreary waste, the country.

"To-morrow will be the first day of June," he said to himself. "It is time to be thinking of a retreat for the summer. This room has served me well for the past six months, but it is not so pleasing in its aspect under the rays of this glaring sun."

He looked around dissatisfied upon the medley of things which made of his one apartment—parlor, dressing-room, library, and atelier; yet there was a mingling of affection with his discontent, for he had too warm a heart to bid adieu without regret to a place where he had spent so many hours both of pleasure and weariness. Any four walls within whose protection he had slept sweet sleeps, dreamed fair dreams, which he had peopled with the creations of his pen and pencil, and where he had felt safe from storm and cold—any four walls within which he had lived (and Pennon knew the full meaning of the verb *to live*), had a claim upon his regard. With a kindly glance he surveyed those things to which he was about to bid farewell; while the sun, throwing the full force of his beams in at the windows, made the light and heat intolerable. Not a breath of cool air could he woo down from amid

the fierce brick battlements which arose upon his outer view, driving him back to the contemplation of his books covered with dust, of the Pysches and Madonnas, Roses and Hebes of his canvas blushing in the broad day, of the soiled bed-cover, and of the worn-out slippers and faded carpet. The paints upon his palette smelled disagreeably; nothing seemed so senseless as the lines he had written an hour before for the — Magazine, and which now lay in torn bits upon the floor. All things had on that commonplace expression which is so distasteful, causing Pennon to say to himself decidedly:

"To-morrow I will go away from here."

Leaning back in his arm-chair, he wandered away in thought to all the retreats he had either seen or heard of—Newport, Greenland, Saratoga, Rome, the Source of the Nile, the Mountain House, Brighton, the North Pole, the Cape, the Sault Ste. Marie. Many other fashionable and unfashionable places he viewed in his reverie, as it was not until after the sun had set, and he had reposed in his arm-chair an hour and a half, that he chose from such a variety an abode to his liking.

It would scarcely be proper to say that Pennon chose an abode, for in fact he had only resolved to go journeying in a certain way, and allow his stopping-place to be a matter of chance, to be decided by likings or events. Like many others of a turn of mind like his, and especially accompanied by the taste for sketching, he thought of making a rambling expedition, partly on foot, down into a beautiful part of his native State, making some drawings for future paintings, and amusing himself with any adventures which might befall.

Planning out some of the particulars of such an excursion, he relapsed into a deep reverie, from which he was aroused by a tap at the door, when the landlady thrust her good-natured face into the room, begging the young gentleman to come to tea.

"The bell has rung and rung," said she; "the other boarders have all supped and gone away. I should 'a' thought you was not in, if it was not so often that I have known you not to hear the bell. I suppose you have been thinking up another of those beautiful stories which I hear people tellin' of—though, law sake! I don't get any time to read, for efforts to make my boarders comfortable."

Thus she rattled on as they descended the stairs together, for Pennon was her favorite, and the only one whom she would not have got out of temper with for keeping her table waiting.

"Yes, Mrs. Butterby," returned her guest, "I have been thinking up an excellent story this time. It will take all summer to complete, but I will come back and tell it to you next November."

"Come back! You don't mean to say you have intentions of leaving us, sir?" and the laugh died out of the dimples in the landlady's rosy face, as she seated herself at the board to pour out the tea.

"It is getting too warm to stay in the city, Mrs. Butterby. I am going into the country to-morrow, but you will see me again in the fall, Providence permitting."

"Dear, dear! It'll be lonesome without your bright face at the table. Howsomever, people *will* take notions that they must go to the country in the summer. I never thought the country was much of a place—but every one to their taste. Don't forget where we live when you come back, Mr. Pennon."

He promised her that he certainly would not forget.

His tea was very sweet—he liked it so; and he could not help feeling a little flattered and grateful for the preference of the good woman who dispensed to him, he was aware, a larger quantity of the sweets of life than she did to any other of her boarders. Her partiality for him was not owing to the fact that he always paid his bill promptly when it was presented, but to that genial kindness in his voice and smile which won the hearts of all, both high and low.

When he had finished his second cup, asked for his bill, settled it, and passed a few parting words of politeness with Mrs. Butterby, he returned to his room, and spent the evening writing letters, packing a trunk with books, clothes and so on; and also in arranging an artist's portfolio and camp-stool combined—an invention which he had himself gotten up to suit his convenience.

He went to bed just weary enough to have delightful dreams, which he took as good omens of his summer tour, woke up in the morning eager and joyous, impatient for his adventures. For, although Pennon was twenty-six, he had almost the impetuosity and freshness of feeling of a child. The world was not "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable" to him; he liked it—that is, pretty generally, though of course there were times when he was very miserable, as there must be with all impassioned natures and sanguine temperaments. This particular morning he was as blithe as Shelley's skylark, and rilled several little melodies while making his toilet, not as sweet as those of that immortal bird, but quite rich and harmonious enough for a mere man without wings to soar "into heaven, or near it."

He went off in the early six o'clock train for the north, and breakfasted at a railroad station, swallowing the black coffee with an inward regret that it was not of his landlady's make. Being safely started upon his journey, it matters not how or where the first three days were passed, until toward the close of that third day he was wandering, camp-stool in hand, through one of the loveliest valleys ever seen, looking up at the near hills and the sunset clouds, and blessing the feeling of the cool soft grass beneath his feet.

Thus it was that Paul Pennon, artist, chanced to

interweave his own web of life with some links of the curious and costly emerald necklace which this unknown young girl had just brought from its hiding-place.

"Look, mother!" said Clematis, as soon as the stranger had been welcomed; "see what I drew up from the well! This gentleman says they are real emeralds."

With her first glance at the treasure the mother grew very pale, and waved her hand as if to move it away.

"You do not know what you have done, my child," she said. "Ill fortune waits upon the one who should first find the emerald necklace."

"Why, mamma, what do you mean? I never heard anything about any necklace. Did you know that it was in the well? Does it belong to the family?"

"No matter, now, my darling. You have found it, and I fear that the fulfillment of the prophecy must fall upon you, which Heaven avert! It was your grandmother's."

Clematis Percy was not superstitious; she would walk through a graveyard alone at night; but something in her mother's voice startled her, and she looked at the glittering bauble with considerable awe. It radiated light like the eyes of a living thing.

"Shall I throw it back in the well?" she asked.

"I suppose it would not alter the fate of your finding it, if you did," said the elder lady, sadly.

"Oh, well; then I'll keep it—it will be so charming to wear around my throat," said Clematis, gayly.

The thought of jewels, real jewels, had dispelled her awe; so she carried away the prize and returned to tea, all curiosity to hear its history, which her mother refused at present to tell.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE HISTORY OF THE NECKLACE.

THE room which Pennon occupied that night was a quaint-looking apartment, and a most agreeable change from the square, dusty, commonplace chamber at Mrs. Butterby's. It was scarcely high enough at two of the sides for him to stand under, but was quite lofty in the center of the pointed ceiling. It was large and dim, with painted walls. Nearly in the center stood the bed, broad and high, covered with a silken counterpane whose embroidered flowers were dim and somewhat frayed with wear, and the bed was shaded quite grandly with lace curtains. The whole furniture, including two or three pictures upon the walls, looked as if it might have been arranged a hundred years before. Nothing looked new except the absence of dust, the scrupulous whiteness of the linen, and a bouquet of fresh flowers in a vase upon a stand. A large Gothic window, corresponding in architecture with the pointed roof, occupied a portion of one side of the room. After looking about with great curiosity, the guest extinguished his light and sat himself by the window to enjoy the effect of the moonlight both within and without.

Immediately beneath, a flower garden sent up a host of mingled perfumes to feast his senses, and all about the casement were twined honeysuckles and roses, clinging to the cold stone with slender tendrils like fingers, and bending over to peep beneath or swing at ease on their airy perches. A stream girdled the valley with a belt of silver; he could hear its drowsy plash where it descended a little flowery slope.

Pennon was in one of his poetical moods. Whether the sweet face he had seen leaning over the well, bathed in the rosy light of sunset, or the peculiar beauty of the place and hour had most to do in inducing it, cannot be said—probably both had their share in leading him on to dangerous dreams of fancy and sentiment.

"This will never do," he murmured, as a clock in the room beneath struck eleven. "If I rise at four in the morning to make my sketch, I must be to bed betimes."

He had been scribbling what may have been rhymes upon a scrap of paper, by the suggestive light of the moon, for the last half-hour. This he thrust into his pocket, and resigned his seat by the window for repose upon the inviting, quaint-looking bed.

Just as he was sinking from conscious thought into slumber, the sound of the clock, striking the midnight hour, fell faintly upon his ear. At the same moment he became aware, as by some mystic influence, of the presence of some one in the chamber. He was wide awake in an instant; and turning his head he saw what, if his conscience had not been clear and his soul composed, would have frightened him.

An old lady stood near his bed. He could not see her face distinctly, but it looked very pale, though not severe. Her hair was puffed and powdered in the ancient style. A broad bar of moonlight lay across her dress, and he could plainly see that it was of rich brocade, cut goring, and plaited into a belt, upon which shone a handsome gold buckle in which he detected the glimmer of jewels. As he gazed at her she spoke. Her voice was hollow, but not unmusical. It had a mournful cadence, as of a voice burdened with too great a knowledge of sorrow.

"Unhappy man! who art thou that thou shouldst come here to trouble the innocent? Was it destiny that led thee to the well at that fatal moment, to blight the fortunes of the fairest of the Percys? Be merciful, and go from here before destiny has its consummation. But that cannot be; fate is immutable—immutable—immutable!"

Her voice arose, not loud but shrill, like the shrieking of a summer wind, and before its accents closed



she glided silently away, save a soft rustle of the silk brocade.

"Well," said Pennon, in a subdued whisper, after a short silence, "this is really like an old romance. One might almost be persuaded that some witchery was connected with those green stones which that well gave up to-day. Immutability! Can it be that I am in any way immutably connected with the fate of that lovely creature?"

His cheek glowed at the thought, until he remembered that the prediction was of her sorrow. That was not so pleasant.

"Pshaw! of course I was dreaming," he ejaculated after a time, and being very sleepy, he dropped again into his slumbers.

He awoke at four o'clock, and the first thing which he remembered was his vision of the night before. It seemed more real in memory even than in experience. If he had not had a contempt for the idea of ghosts, he would certainly have believed in the apparition. The more he thought of it the more it puzzled him; so he dismissed it as much as possible from his mind.

"To get up or not to get up thus early in the morning, is the question," he softly yawned.

Four hours of sleep had hardly rested him, and he was about to give up the idea of a sketch, when he caught a glimpse of the hills through the window, and they wore such a magic atmosphere, and the sky beyond was tinged so exquisitely, that the artist awoke in his soul. He forgot his reluctance, and sprang from his couch in a glow of enthusiasm.

In fifteen minutes he was on his way to a part of the valley from which he wished to begin his work. He came back to breakfast none too soon; the family were at the table when he entered. They gave him a courteous greeting; that of Clematis was very slight in words, but a rapid hightening of color in her cheek spoke of interest or timidity.

His drawing, which was done in water-colors, was looked at by all and very much admired.

"If we only had so good a picture of our dear native valley, how much I should like it," said Clematis, and then blushed for fear the stranger would think she was asking him in that way to give it to her.

Pennon looked up quickly to Farmer Percy. "An oil-painting will be more durable," said he, "and if you do not feel that I shall intrude for a day or two, I will copy this in oil for your daughter. It will be but a small return for the privilege of stopping in this beautiful place."

Clematis turned her bright eyes upon her father with a look which asked him to accept the offer.

This he was glad to do; and before the meal was completed, arrangements were concluded on. The farmer was going to the village that morning for men to help him cut the grass in his meadows, and he would stop at the hotel and get the box containing canvas, etc., at the same time that he informed the landlord of the whereabouts of his guest, and bade him take care of his other baggage until called for.

That afternoon an impromptu easel was set up in the rose-shadowed and rose-scented parlor of the old farm-house. What pen could hope to picture the charm of those swift-footed hours stealing by, while Pennon painted, talking at the same time in his instructive, fanciful and original manner to mother and daughter, as they sat, with their sewing, listening and answering more by smiles and interested looks than by words. Sometimes Clematis sung, at his request, and then he painted with more wonderful swiftness and effect than ever—his brushes seemed to fly of themselves, his colors to take on rare tints, until the picture glowed in an ethereal softness of atmosphere more beautiful than the loveliest reality.

Ah! the sturdy farmer did not guess, much as he was delighted with the scene, that giving him that picture for a few days' board and lodging, was like giving him a costly pearl or diamond in return for a toy basket.

It was on the fourth afternoon of his stay that at his solicitation, equal with her daughter's, Mrs. Percy gave the family legends connected with the string of emeralds which Clematis had found in the well.

A soft wind was blowing among the roses, and distant glimpses of the landscape he was working upon could be had from the open windows. The very witchery of the present romance seemed hovering about the young couple, while the still handsome mother took up the romance of the past.

"You must know," began the matron, with a look of pride not at all unbecoming to her, "that the Percys are an ancient family, and that Clematis has good blood in her veins."

"I do not doubt it," thought the artist, with a glance at the peach-like cheeks, so fresh and velvety, where the rich veins glowed with the very healthiest and best of blood.

"But it is not on her father's side alone that she is thus gifted; my own family was the peer of the Percys, in the good old days of Queen Bess, before this country was any more than a strange and unfamiliar dream. The necklace came into the family in 1595. It was presented by Mortimer Monteith to my beautiful ancestress, Lady Alice de Vere, on the day of her wedding to John, Earl of Lester."

Mortimer Monteith was a Scotch cousin of the Lady Alice's, who had once been a suitor for her hand, but who had been rejected. He was not a man to inspire the other sex with tender sentiment, says the tradition; and he took his dismissal in that silent sort of way which no one knows how to interpret. However, he was present at the wedding-feast, and gave the lovely bride the costly gift, clasping it about her white throat with his own hands.

"That night, when the bridegroom sought the chamber of his bride, he found her dead in her bed; nor could all the science of the best physicians of that day say what it was that killed her. The emerald necklace, which her maidens had forgotten to unclasp, was about her throat, sparkling and flashing like some beautiful serpent exulting in its power to destroy. At least, it thus appeared to some, while others would not acknowledge that it could possess any fatal influence. Monteith was never heard from afterward; and the widowed earl threw his life away in battle at the first opportunity."

"After these tragic occurrences, the necklace slumbered many years in its casket. Upon the marriage of another beauty from the house of De Vere, it was sent, among other jewels, a present to the bride. Three weeks after the wedding, she was instantly killed, by being thrown from her horse, while out hunting. Singularly enough, she wore the emeralds at the time, having taken a fancy that they suited her green velvet riding habit. A whisper now breathed through the family that some evil and fatal influence lingered in the necklace. For a period of seventy years no one could be induced to wear it; and no bride of the De Veres but would have shuddered at having it presented to her. It was kept in a casket by itself, and looked at as a curiosity. Its splendor and costliness was no temptation to the vanity of the fair women who examined it; until Madeline Monteith, a brilliant creature, full of spirit and bravery, being betrothed to a noble cavalier, avowed her intention of possessing herself of the necklace to add to the jewels of her *trousseau*. It was a shame, she said, to let so superb an ornament languish in perpetual darkness, because of a foolish superstition; the bride who wore it last would have been thrown from her horse, if she had not chosen to wear the emeralds. As for herself, they became her, they were magnificent, and she would wear them. She had her way about it; and for a time she seemed to prosper; but she never left her chamber after the birth of a puny boy, and died in less than a year from her bridal day."

"It would weary you," continued Mrs. Percy, "to recount the history of the various women of our line who have perished from accident or met with sudden death, after having had the temerity to wear the emerald necklace. It has been the traditionary belief that Mortimer Monteith laid such a curse and ban upon his gift as can never be shaken off. Inspired with horror by mournful tragedies connected with it, it has several times been thrown away by some one or another of my ancestors, yet it has never failed, sooner or later, to come to light, whether it were thrown into yawning chasms, into bosoms of deep lakes, into fires, or, as in this latest instance, into a voiceless well; and the finder has ever been as unfortunate as those to whom it has been presented."

"It came, with a branch of the family, over the water about a hundred years ago. The vessel in which they sailed was wrecked on Absecom coast; but all of the passengers were saved, except one young girl, Anne de Vere, a lovely creature, the pride and hope of all, who being dragged to shore in the mad clasp of her father, was found to be drowned, that hateful necklace glimmering about her throat in the pale light of the stormy dawn."

"Of course, in this age of realities, of science, light, and knowledge generally, our faith in omens, bans, curses, and all traditionary legends, is not very strong; and my mother, who was a woman of excellent mind, smiled at the stories attached to the costly trinket, which she thought would be a fine present to me upon the occasion of my marriage. She sent to an aunt, who had the jewels in charge (almost the sole remaining token of former splendor), who forwarded them at her request, and they arrived the day before my marriage. This house, in which we still reside, was the homestead of my mother. Well do I remember of taking that dreaded box (for I confess to a small degree of superstition), stealing out in the moonlight, and dropping it into the well—after which I breathed more freely; and could give my hand to my lover, the next morning, with no worse dread than maidens usually feel upon similar occasions. It was eighteen years ago the tenth of last month," she added, with a soft sigh.

"And to your throwing away the emeralds, I suppose, you attribute all of your and papa's unwonted felicity," said Clematis, with a light laugh.

"I do—I certainly do!" murmured Mrs. Percy; "and I am sorry you found them, Clematis. May Heaven avert the usual result!"

The mother said this so solemnly that the young girl felt oppressed for a moment. The dying light of the sun streaked the twilight with rosy bars; the perfumed wind sighed at the casement; a bird fluttered to its nest with a sudden, tremulous cry.

The artist had put the last touch to his picture as the lady spoke the last word of her story. He had been listening while he painted—now he laid aside his pallet, looked at Clematis and sighed.

"Come!" laughed she, "this is growing melancholy; let us criticise your picture, Sir Artist."

But there was not light enough left for this severe business—she must defer her decision to the morrow.

To-morrow! To-morrow their guest was going away.

#### CHAPTER III. THE ACCIDENT.

THAT same evening, after the lamps were brought in, Mr. Percy joined the company, asking his daughter for some music. Clematis could wile strange melodies out of the old-fashioned piano; every one loved to hear her play and sing. While she complied with her father's request, Pennon sat silently regarding her, and thinking how loth he should be

to quit the stone cottage, now that his picture was finished.

"If I could only invent another excuse," he sighed. "Not that any thing is to be gained by staying here, in particular—only the opportunity of enjoying this delightful country; and the house is so quiet and the people so pleasant—I wish they would take me as a boarder for a few weeks. A great many persons take summer boarders. I wonder if they would be displeased if I should make the proposition."

While he was musing upon the best way to broach the subject, Clematis, who had been playing some of her gayest, least soulful music, arose and moved to the lamp on the center-table.

"Mamma," she said, with a smiling face, "is it not curious, we have not only been favored by having an artist in our valley, but some poet has also been wandering about this vicinity. Papa found this paper out in the meadow, and brought it to me thinking it mine. It is quite like poetry—shall I read it to you?"

A sudden suspicion crossed Pennon's mind. He thrust his hand in his vest pocket with a look of dismay.

"Yes, to be sure, Clematis, read it."

"It begins, as usual, with a title," said the mischievous girl, with apparent gravity, "and is called, 'At the Well.'"

Here Pennon made a start to seize the paper, but was prevented, and the young lady continued:

#### "AT THE WELL."

'She stood beside the ancient well,  
A youthful girl, in rustic plight;  
The rosy sunset round her fell,  
Flushing her form with lovely light.

'No rustic was she, though she dipp'd  
The bucket to the fountain deep,  
And laugh'd to see how silvery dripp'd  
The water from the bending sweep.

'If ever angel troubled pool—  
As the old legends love to say—  
An angel stirr'd the ripples cool  
Within that well at close of day.

'The sunset's glow was not more bright  
Than the rich masses of her hair,  
Just where they rounded to the light  
In nestling on her shoulders fair.

'Eyes laughing, and yet full of pride,  
And fuller still of love and hope;  
And cheeks as delicately dyed  
As flowers that in the moonlight ope.

'The lip with its own sweetness mute,  
The dazzling arm, the graceful form  
Light poised upon one slender foot—  
All bathed in sunlight soft and warm!

'As if to greet her own bright eyes  
She bent above the mossy curb;  
I long'd, yet fear'd, by some surprise  
The beauteous vision to disturb.

'Just then a wild and thrilling scream  
Sent back the life-blood from my cheek;  
Alas! how vanish'd my sweet dream;  
I hate a frighten'd woman's shriek."

"I did not write that last verse—you added it yourself," cried Pennon, half-angry at the mocking tone of sentiment with which she read his unfortunate production, yet obliged to laugh at the mock-heroic conclusion she had tacked on to the unfinished poem.

"You!" she exclaimed; "you are the author, then, are you? and of course I am the heroine."

"Of course you are! and the most beautiful of all the hundreds I have had, and the most willing to read and proclaim your own praises."

There was a trifle of malice in the last half of his sentence, which was provoked by an intuitive feeling that if Clematis had cared any thing about his verses or his commendations, at least if she had regarded them with a shadow of tender feeling, she would not thus have dared to make mirth out of them; she would have laid them away in her escritoire, or her most precious book of poems, and said nothing about them.

But the only keenness in his words lurked in the first ones: "He had sung the praises of a hundred others. It was nothing new to him to meet lovely women and string rhymes together in their honor. It was only an amusement."

Thus thought Clematis, and suddenly lost her gayety. Pennon, too, was a little out of humor. He lost his desire to spend any more time in the valley; concluded he had been a silly fellow for the last three days, and that his baggage at the hotel in the village needed attending to. He confined his conversation almost entirely to Mrs. Percy, who reserved but profoundly polite, and stole but an occasional glance at the beautiful girl, who sat with crimson cheek and downcast eyes, busying herself with some trifling work.

Immediately after breakfast the next morning he was ready to say good-by. Mr. and Mrs. Percy both warmly invited him to stop and see them whenever he should pass through the valley, and he accepted their invitation; he had now some thoughts of returning another summer—perhaps the next.

If the lip of Clematis trembled a little when she heard this, he did not see it; she was bright, and friendly, and calm when she gave him her hand to say farewell.

So he went away; and Clematis crushed a burning tear between her eyelids as she watched through



the lace of the curtain at her window, and saw his form slowly disappear down the road.

"I, living in this secluded spot, never before met a man like him—as accomplished, gifted, accustomed to the world, and to admiration, too, no doubt—for how could he help exciting it?" she murmured, with bitterness. "But he has seen thousands of ladies not only more beautiful (nay, Clematis; look in thy mirror, child!), but in every way more fitted to win his regard, skilled in the arts and wiles that worldlings prize; fashionably attired, elegant, versed in the gossip of the day. But why do I care for that? Must I be admired in order to be happy? Have I not my books and music, and my garden, and my dear father and mother? I wonder why it seems so lonely living in the country—it never did before."

Resolved not to feel lonely, she tied on her straw hat and went down to the yard, forcing herself to sing a gay ballad—"Coming through the Rye." When she came to the words,

"Ilka lassie has her laddie—  
Nane, they say, ha'e I,"

she broke down, and went on getting her flowers in silence.

This silence was presently disturbed by the raising of the gate latch. She looked up and saw their guest returning up the walk, pale and limping, leaning upon a stick which he had picked up. As she hastened to him, her ingenuous face spoke eloquently of the fear and interest she felt.

"Are you hurt?"

"I sprained my ankle in jumping over a fence. It was very careless of me. I have dragged myself back for half a mile, and must wait, I think, until some wagon passes which is going to my destination. A foolish accident!" he said, forcing a smile, though he evidently suffered.

"I am so sorry," murmured Clematis. "Take my arm, do, until we get in the house, or lean on my shoulder. Mother will bind it up for you—she is very skillful."

"You speak like Jane Eyre," remarked Pennon, in a peculiar tone, as he accepted her offer.

"Oh, yes, I remember! And you are Rochester. I did not think of that when I spoke. But you have a good precedent in accidents."

"It does not ease the pain any, though, to remember that others have suffered. However, this is a mere nothing. It does not hurt so much now."

Was it because he was clinging to the slender support so sympathetically offered him? They reached the house, and Mrs. Percy's skill was put to the test.

"It feels so nicely. Thank you a thousand times," he said, after she had bathed and bandaged it, and he was extended upon the sofa in the parlor in an easy position.

"No; I shall not hail any wagon," returned Mrs. Percy, in answer to something he had said. "You are a little feverish now, and it would increase very much if you endured the jar of riding nine or ten miles. Let your mind and body both rest, but do not be afraid that you are troubling us. We are glad to have you back, though we are sorry for your misfortune."

"Do not call it a misfortune, then," said Pennon, quite gayly. "I ought to be content if you are. It is not every bruised or wounded mortal that can be nursed in a place like this."

Clematis brought him his dinner with her own hands. After that she read to him an hour in Tennyson's "Princess," and then left him to slumber for awhile. She felt very sorry for the pain he endured, but she was happy to serve him, and light-hearted in the thought that she could confer pleasure.

There was company to tea. Some relatives of Mr. Percy had come to spend a fortnight with him. There was an aunt, a rather coarse-looking woman, tall as a grenadier, who wore a dark-green lute-string dress, a black silk apron, and three little twists of curls down either of her hollow cheeks. Pennon almost shuddered at her voice, for he was fastidious about "a low, sweet voice in woman," and hers was loud and creaking. He surmised that she had some kindness, if she could only have her own way about showing it, in her self-willed heart. She was accompanied by her son, a young gentleman of twenty-two, who was away during a vacation from his college, and had come to see "if his cousin Clematis had grown as pretty as she promised." He had attempted to kiss her when she met him in the hall (Pennon heard it all), declaring that it was only a cousinly right, but she had rejected the salute upon the plea that "he was at best not more than a second cousin."

"At which I hope to have cause for rejoicing," was the rejoinder.

Pennon took a dislike to him before he saw him, which was increased afterward. Julien Percy was as small as his mother was large; a dapper, dandyish fellow, elegant with the airs of a collegiate youth. Poppishness can be forgiven his age, however, and it was not that which caused the dislike of Pennon. Something cold and selfish in his eye and cautious in his manner was repulsive to a person devoid of such things.

The prejudice was mutual. Mr. Julien Percy had not expected to find a man so much finer in appearance, and in every way superior to himself, so perfectly at home in the house of his cousin. Pennon did not go out to tea, which gave the visitors opportunity to ask questions about him.

"I am surprised that you should have allowed yourself to be taken in by a mere strolling adventurer, uncle," remarked Julien, with a slight sneer, when he had elicited the information he desired. "These traveling artists have not all of them the best of characters."

"Mr. Pennon is not a traveling artist; and if he were, it would be nothing to his discredit. Besides, he has told us all about his family and his residence, and his pursuits," spoke Clematis, with a little betrayal of excitement.

"Then all that remains for your prudence to discover is whether his stories are true or not," replied her cousin, coolly.

"We do not doubt him. His face speaks for his truth." A red spot glowed upon Clematis's cheek. Her cousin saw it and laughed.

"He has a very handsome face, and such usually speak to young ladies eloquently enough, whether they speak truth or not," he said.

"You could not have had a fair opportunity of judging," replied she, and laughed at him so brightly, that he was sorely vexed at her remark.

"Don't let us quarrel," said he; "especially about my beauty;" and he ran a hand, slender and white enough for a woman's, almost, through his straight black hair.

"I detest quarreling, so I will agree to the proposition," answered Clematis; and having finished their tea they returned to the parlor together, looking so well-pleased with each other that a pang shot through the heart of the lame man—who was obliged to remain upon his sofa and witness the numberless attempts of the new-comer to flatter and please. That very pang annoyed Pennon.

"Can it be," he asked himself, "that I am growing envious?"

Is there ever an occasion upon which a woman can be so brilliant, so unconscious of her brilliancy, and so bewilderingly charming without meaning to be, as when she has two admirers in her presence at once, each treating the other with marked but freezing civility, and both doing their best to please her? We are obliged to confess it, even of the most artless and truthful; and so it is not to be wondered at that Clematis was very beautiful and very bewitching that evening; nor that her cousin lay awake some time that night dreaming waking dreams of the fine old homestead, the five thousand dollars in bank, and the beautiful creature, his future wife—nor that the pain in Pennon's ankle kept him tossing until nearly morning.

The next day Pennon had a lonely time. Clematis was busy every moment. She had resolved to be polite to her cousin, and have some company for him. The gentle old horse was put in the chaise, and she drove around to the few families in the neighborhood and invited the young people over for that evening. When she returned she had the rooms to arrange and some of the refreshments to prepare.

"What are you going to do with me, Miss Percy, in the midst of your happy guests? I think you had better send me off to bed at nightfall."

"No, indeed! I am going to have an easy chair and footstool in the nicest corner for you. Perhaps I shall crown you with flowers and place you upon a sort of throne for all my friends to do honor to you. Why, I depend upon you as one of the attractions of my company."

"Mr. Julien, I suppose, being the first."

"Of course," she replied, not the least disconcerted; "I make the party for him. But that you need not want for any attention when I am occupied with him, I have told a black-eyed friend of mine, Kitty Parker, that she must do her prettiest to entertain you."

"I do not like black eyes as well as I do soft gray ones."

"The soft gray of the brooding dove,  
Full of the sweet and tender ray  
Of holy love."

They are more amiable."

"Has all your previous experience given you no more tact than that in paying compliments? I could manage one more delicately myself, and I am but

"A youthful girl, in rustic guise."

She turned the full splendor of her eyes upon him as she spoke; she was not going to be abashed by flatteries.

"I shall not beg your pardon," said Pennon, looking into them steadily, and strangely thrilled by their beautiful, mystic fire, "for I spoke only the truth. I have always fancied a certain kind of gray eyes, and yours have more than confirmed the liking. I should like to look into them thus forever."

Now, indeed, the eyes wavered and sunk, and a sweet blush kindled in her cheek, for something was in his voice besides mere compliment.

"Until supper-time, perhaps," was her reply, with an attempt at gayety, and she went on in silence completing her arrangement of the parlor.

Every thing that her fairy hands touched took from them a peculiar grace. She did not lift a book or place a vase, or make a new fold in the drapery of a window, but the thing seemed infinitely improved. It was a calm happiness to a world-weary man like Pennon to recline at his ease upon that old mahogany sofa and watch the young girl flit about the quaint room.

"It is sweeter than any romance," he mused. "How lightly and deftly she performs her tasks. She is a good housewife as well as a creature of poetry; and I am sure she would look graceful anywhere—for instance, making butter. And those kind of things are not to be laughed at. All men are not enormously rich, and she will not be likely to have a very wealthy husband, here in this retired spot. A husband? I wonder if she ever thinks of it—she ought not to. There is no man fit for so pure, sensitive, and lovely a being as she. But she has so much faith and generosity, I warrant she

would be easily deceived in character. That cousin of hers, for instance—does she like him?"

"You are very fond of flowers?" he asked, aloud.

Clematis laughed in her soft, ringing way.

"Perhaps there are too many to be in good taste. But this is the season of flowers, and we should enjoy them. They are better than new furniture and fashionable elegancies—don't you think so?"

"There! do you think these roses and myrtles look well to loop back this lace curtain with?"

"I think they are exquisite."

"Thank you. Now I am going to dress. I expect that you will smile at my attire, for I have not had a dress made for six months, and of course I shall be antediluvian to a dweller in the city. As for the rest of the people, they will be as old-fashioned as I, and I do not care for them."

She came down dressed when the tea-bell rung, for it was sunset then, and she expected her guests early. She brought in Pennon's tea to the parlor herself, and her heart beat with pleasure as she noted his admiring gaze. She had just left her mirror, and knew that she was looking well; if she had not been very modest she would have known that she was radiantly lovely. Her fresh complexion did not have to wait for the dazzle of artificial light—it could dare the full glow of light which yet lingered at the window. Her cheeks were like the velvet inner leaf of a rose in their soft bloom. Her hair was even more lustrous than usual, for she had arranged it carefully, giving it many a cunning wind around her skillful fingers. She wore a pretty light silk, with point lace about the neck and sleeves. Her arms and throat were bare; the half-high corsage of her dress giving just room to display the emerald necklace—for she had clasped that about her throat. She smiled when Pennon's eye fell upon it.

"I am not at all superstitious," she said, "and I am going to wear it. I suppose I am rather youthful to be donning jewels, but I have taken such a fancy to this."

"I do not know which gains by your wearing it, the emeralds or your complexion. What will your mother say, Miss Percy?"

"Oh, I do not believe she will care."

"Why, cousin, that's a splendid necklace you have," said Mr. Julien, strolling into the room at the moment. "What did it cost?"

"If all legends, presentiments, prophecies and fears are true, it will cost me very dear," was the unsatisfactory answer, as she hurried away to her tea.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### THE WORKING OF THE CHARM.

THE party was a pleasant little affair. Pennon amused himself with observing the peculiarities of some of the more plain of the country people about him, not ill-naturedly, but with the love of acquainting himself with new varieties of men which a citizen of the world has. He was cosmopolitan through and through—could have made himself friends and a home anywhere, unless it might be among the Battakers, that race of savages of whom the Countess Ida Pfeiffer even was a little afraid. He had traveled East and West, North and South, and knew how to make himself a favorite at that little country festivity. His picture was much talked of and admired, and some very original criticisms and remarks passed upon it. Clematis and Kitty Parker, her black-eyed friend, played cotillions for the others to dance.

Kitty sympathized with him very much because of his sprained ankle, and his inability to dance; and he, as he could not lead off a cotillion with her, told her tales of what he had seen and heard that interested her very much. But his eyes and thoughts followed Clematis.

When the company had all gone, as he limped off to bed upon the arm of Julien Percy, whose aid he was obliged to accept, he turned a lingering gaze upon the young girl. His heart grew heavy, and he longed to lift his finger and say, "Beware!" She seemed to him, all of a sudden, to be invested with danger or misfortune, unseen and unrecognized, but certain and close at hand. Why he felt so he could not tell. He was a good magnetizer, though he seldom exercised his power, and now he half-deemed that some magnetic relation was established between him and Clematis, which warned him of something about to happen to her.

"One would think that a little physical pain had affected my brain," he murmured to himself, after bidding his escort good-night at the door. "Perhaps it is the sultriness in the air which oppresses me."

He leaned out of the window. The atmosphere was stifling; not a breath stirred; the west was black with a thunder-storm. By-and-by a hot wind out of the coming cloud struck his cheek. He watched the magnificent but almost fearful storm as it swept rapidly up from the horizon. Large drops of rain began to fall. He closed his window to keep them out, and, creeping into bed, lay listening to the awful music of the elements. As his thoughts throbbed with the thunder, which rolled and broke and trembled overhead, he muttered a verse from Childe Harold:

"Sky, mountains, rivers, winds, lake, lightnings! yet  
With night, and clouds, and thunders, and a soul  
To make these felt and feeling, well may be  
Things which have made me watchful; the far roll  
Of your departing voices is the knell  
Of what in me is sleepless—if I rest.  
But where of ye, oh, tempests! is the goal?  
Are ye like those within the human breast?  
Or do ye find at last, like eagles, some high nest?"



A terrible crash of thunder cut the last words short. It was so close and overwhelming that he was certain the house was struck, and sprung out of bed, threw a dressing-gown about him, and opening the door looked into the hall.

There he saw Julien Percy flying about like one distracted, his white night-gown fluttering about him, looking so comical and so frightened that he burst out laughing.

"Oh, dear!" cried the young man, perceiving him, "where shall we go to? We will certainly all be struck. I am so afraid of lightning, Mr. Pennon—I always was. Mother! mother!" knocking at her door, "I wish you would let me get into bed with you."

Pennon hobbled back and flung himself down on the bed to laugh. The idea of a youth of twenty-two still fleeing to his mother's side for refuge from apprehended danger, was very ludicrous to him. He was almost malicious enough to wish that Clematis might have—

"Clematis! what of her?"

He paused in his laughter, and asked himself this question.

"Something has happened to her, I know. I wish that I dared to go to her chamber-door and ask, or that I knew where her parents slept that I might ask them to go."

Just then his door unclosed and she came in, gliding slowly, and pale as a ghost. He had left his lamp burning to dim the glare of the lightning, and he saw her distinctly. She had not undressed. She was just as she was when he saw her last, except that the necklace was gone from her neck, and her curls were partially put up in a comb. He arose and spoke to her gently, for he conceived that she was greatly frightened. She made no reply, but stood close by him, looking at him with a steady but meaningless gaze. He thought she might have a habit of walking in her sleep, and touched her hand to arouse her. She shuddered from head to foot at his touch, but gave no other sign of consciousness.

Now thoroughly alarmed, he aroused the household. Her parents were distressed and half out of their senses at her condition. They said she had no habit of a somnambulist. She was taken and laid upon the bed in her own room, her temples and hands chafed, and every endeavor made to restore her to animation, for she seemed to be in a strange sort of a fit. She gave no signs of recovery, except that once or twice when Pennon chanced to touch her the same shudder went through her frame, and he grew afraid to approach her for fear of increasing her suffering, if she suffered.

"I believe that it is the effect of fright," said Mr. Percy, as he sat by her bedside and gazed upon her in anguish.

"Will not some one go for a physician?" sobbed his wife.

"I would that I knew the way, or that my foot was well," answered Pennon; "but I will go, if I have to creep on my knees, if you will tell me where."

Julien stood by, but the storm was still so severe that he would not have offered to go forth for anything less than his own life.

"John, the hired man, can go. He knows the way, and can get on the horse and ride. I will go and send him," said the father.

"She was struck by the lightning, I do believe," exclaimed Pennon, as he picked up the fragments of the necklace from where they lay upon the floor before the chimney-piece, against which her mirror rested. The necklace was severed in two pieces.

"Oh! that fatal bauble!" cried Mrs. Percy; "I knew it—it was always so!"

All hastened forward to examine it. It appeared wrenched apart as by some great force, and the gold upon which it was strung was melted as by fire in one place.

"We will dash water over her, then," said the aunt, who had her thoughts more collected than any of the others. "Maybe she will come to before the doctor gets here."

Pennon retired to his room and paced up and down regardless of the pain his ankle gave him, until after the physician arrived and had given his opinion.

The cold water had been efficacious in restoring her partially, for she moved her eyes, and seemed to recognize her friends, though she could not speak. The doctor examined her throat. It did not appear injured outwardly; but after seeing the necklace, he was of opinion that a very light current of electricity had passed down the chimney, come out at the crevice above the mirror, and fixed upon the necklace just at the point where it was broken. He had discovered a bit of steel wire wound upon it. The mother said she knew the emeralds had come apart, the links being a little corroded in one or two places, from long laying in the water, and that Clematis had mended it for the occasion, in what manner she did not know. The doctor was further of the opinion that the shock had paralyzed her powers of speech, and that there was great danger they would never be restored.

"My child, my beautiful child! can it be that such a misfortune has come upon you?" moaned Mrs. Percy in distress that was painful to witness.

It was evident now that Clematis understood them. She was asked to speak, but made no reply; asked to swallow some water, and when her lips were pressed apart with a spoon, she made the desired effort with success.

"She can swallow, at least," said the physician; "so there is no danger of her starving; and in the course of time perhaps her speech will return. I will consult with a physician in the city as soon as possible."

This was poor comfort, but it was all that they could get. It was now almost morning, and no one thought of sleeping, but sat drearily watching the rising of a lovely day; no one but cousin Julien, who stole away to his couch and dropped into slumber in the midst of a characteristic reverie.

"A dumb wife! If the fortune was a little greater, now, a person might even go that; especially one so beautiful. This place, and five thousand in bank, and what I shall have from mother—and they do say that a woman's tongue is a great bore—so, of course, a woman that has none must be a prize. And then, too, folks will believe me so disinterested. Not so confounded bad as I was afraid it would be!" And he slept.

Pennon made his way to the parlor, and flinging open a shutter, sat by the window and gazed out at the east, just faintly flushing at the coming sun. Every flower in the garden was hanging out its censor of perfume, every leaf was laden with rain-drops, and one little bird awoke and warbled to another until the air was full of inspiring melody. But the young gentleman was pale and troubled. He strove, in the stillness of that solitary hour, to read his heart and find why that fair girl had become so dear to him, and why he felt so much distress at her affliction. It was not sympathy alone with her condition, nor pity for the grief of her parents which so pained him.

Before he came to the stone cottage he had wandered through many places and met with many beautiful women. Once or twice, or thrice, his heart had been touched deeply, but saving his first boyish love, which all men have before they come of age, he had not been bound to any one. He had known Clematis Percy but a week. In that time he had not altered the impression he received when he first beheld her standing, a vision of loveliness, at the well, unless for one still more favorable. Lovers do not seek to analyze why they love; so Pennon was, perhaps, only asking himself why he was so strangely interested. Beauty combined with modesty, youth with dignity, amiability with intellect, fresh unsullied tastes and sympathies with sense and discretion, innocence with a certain degree of wisdom—these were enough to form his excuse without recalling the arch smile, the sweet fire of the soulful eye, the joyous mirth, the lovely tinge of sentiment, the sweet behavior to her parents, the quick sense of duty. These two latter might be old-fashioned virtues, scorned by many of the sex he had been most accustomed to associate with, but they were charms more fascinating to Pennon than refined and voluptuous indolence and selfishness.

"Oh, just and merciful Heaven!" he murmured, looking up to the calm sky, "why didst thou choose to smite such an one as this? Why did thine arrows of fire fall upon the innocent?"

He remained absorbed in thought until the bell called him to the dining-room. He went to the table more to meet the family and inquire after the invalid than because he felt it possible to eat. The appetites of all had vanished—still excepting Julien Percy's, who fasted somewhat for appearance sake—and the breakfast was a sad contrast to the merry meal of the previous evening.

Mrs. Percy informed Pennon that Clematis appeared quite well, was perfectly in her right mind, and had answered all her questions as well as she was able by looks and motions; said she did not suffer; had put her arms about her and kissed her with a bright smile, as much as to ask her not to grieve herself on account of her accident. All similar cases that any of the party had heard of, were discussed. At one moment, hope was raised as one told of paralysis which had only lasted a day or a week; again it was depressed when others were mentioned where it was lasting. Some one told of a case where a woman was struck by lightning and made dumb for a number of years, but had suddenly recovered her speech during a severe thunder storm. This gave rise to a great deal of talk about electricity, and the use of the magnetic battery, and the probability of the physician having recourse to it.

As they arose from the table, Pennon said to his host and hostess:

"The stage passes here to-day at ten o'clock, I believe. I will not further trespass upon your bounty, but go on my way, not without a very sad heart at leaving you in this sorrow. I shall be in the city very soon, and shall consult the very best physicians upon your daughter's case, and write to you their opinions."

"We are very sorry to part with you," replied Mrs. Percy, touched by his evident emotion. "We have learned to regard you as a friend, and hardly like to part with you at this sad time. I should love to have you regard this as a home, if you can be happy in staying longer."

"I can hardly think I am going away to know no more of the friends I so fortunately chanced upon. We may meet again. But now, if I had no other reason for going, I should hurry away to find what can be done for your daughter. Can I see her, to say good-by before I go?"

Mrs. Percy told him he could go to her room in half an hour. He spent that time in pacing up and down the garden-walk. As he went up-stairs into the anteroom communicating with Clematis's room, he heard a voice speaking rapidly, and saw that the door was ajar. He had no intention of listening, nor any idea that anything private was being said with open doors, and was not to blame that the following sentences reached his ear as he went forward:

"You have probably thought, coz, that your prospects of marriage were injured by your misfortunes—that Clematis Percy would not be as attractive as hitherto—but with one, at least, it is not so. I love you more devotedly than ever—I should love you to distraction if you never spoke another word. I have

come to comfort you by offering to marry you. Will you have me? Speak—or no, write—I mean write what you feel—two or three dear words—that you will be mine. Here is the pencil—write!"

Pennon went softly back, and waited in burning impatience for the coach to make its appearance.

"I must go and say farewell, though—this will never do. It will look very careless or very ungrateful. I wonder if that cousin is out of the room yet! I wonder if she accepted him! Can the fellow really have more heart than I thought? I hope so, for the sake of her who is to be his wife."

He went up to her room. There was no one in it at that instant. She lay on the bed, looking calm and beautiful. She smiled a greeting as he came to her side.

"Miss Percy, I have come to say good-by!"

How harsh and cold the words came out of his throat! In trying to be calm he appeared almost rude. Her lips quivered, and her dark lashes drooped to her cheeks to conceal the intense look of disappointment. She made a motion to give him her hand, but his tone had been so cold that she withdrew it, and it fell languidly upon the bed.

There was a paper slate on the couch, with something written upon it. Was it dishonorable in Pennon, feeling what he did and what depended upon it, that he should seek to read the trembling characters traced thereon? If it was, he was so agitated that he did not reflect upon it until later in the day, but allowed his glance to rest upon what was all important to others besides Julien Percy:

"That my prospects of marriage are injured is no regret to me. I have parents, and love to live with them. I do not think of being wedded; and if I should, it would not, *could* not be to you, though I am grateful for your preference—your disinterested affection. I am your loving cousin—I *can never* be any thing more to you."

"Clematis!"

She looked up quickly, for his tone had changed; it sent the blood to her face before she met his eyes.

"God bless you and restore you to health."

He bent forward and kissed her, and the tear which fell upon her cheek from his eyes at that moment thrilled through her being more sweetly than even the first kiss which had ever been pressed by other than relations upon her lips.

With blinded vision Pennon hurried into the hall, almost running over Mr. Percy, whom he met there.

"How is Clematis now?" asked the father.

"I hardly know—I think she is very well. Will you not step into my room a moment, Mr. Percy? I have something which refuses not to be said."

They went in together and closed the door.

"I love your daughter, Mr. Percy. I did not know how much until I went to part from her. I can not leave her—that is, with your permission to stay—while she is as she is now. I know that this is sudden—that I am a stranger; but I know that you will find me worthy of confidence. You can write to those whom you know in my native city and learn about me. I will wait your approval until then. But I wish the privilege of being near Clematis."

"Which I will not deny, for I like you. But Clematis—poor girl! have you spoken to her? She will hardly care for a lover now."

"And I do not know that she will care in the least for me. I have not spoken to her. I waited your permission. She may reject me; very likely she will—for what am I in the eyes of one like her? But if you say I may speak, I will go to her at once."

"Perhaps we had better wait for the letters," said Mr. Percy, with a smile, "before that most important part is acted. A father's prudence—not a man's friendship."

## CHAPTER V.

### THE WONDERFUL CASTLE.

Pennon was again upon his wandering way in a melancholy mood. He had been rejected. He was not a very vain man, considering his advantages of personal appearance, genius, and worldly position. And yet it was true that he felt mortified at being refused by a simple country maiden, when so many city belles would have been proud of his preference. He felt mortified at times, but not always; for Clematis Percy seemed to him a being the graces of whose soul were such that no worldly advantages were to be held in comparison, nor any man to feel humiliated because she did not give him her love. He felt that he had aspired to her love—not brought himself down to it; and because it was withheld he could blame no one, and he certainly did not blame her. There was in his breast not precisely "an aching void," but a settled feeling of grief as at some overwhelming loss. He had allowed his hopes to dwell upon this new treasure so strongly, that when he found it was not for him, he felt as if he had lost what was his.

He had grown very tired of the life he was leading in the city, before he went from it. It was a restless desire to find if the ideal of life could not be realized which sent him forth to rove over the country in quest of some new experience. Suddenly as light bursts through a rain-cloud and pours a glory over the world, a new hope had flooded his being with radiance and revealed to him the paradise he had unknowingly yearned for. He had cried "Eureka!" to his rejoicing spirit—and now how dull, and selfish, and commonplace the world had grown again!

In a desponding, if not in a bitter frame of mind, he wandered listlessly from place to place.

He went to Lake George, and sketched and



painted for a while; but his genius seemed to have forsaken him, except as far as painting female faces went. His attempts at other things seemed all to turn, as if by fairy wand, into beautiful heads with spiritual gray eyes, loving and pure, long masses of rich brown hair, lips that seemed, even upon canvas, tremulous with feeling and melody, and foreheads not more delicately fair than expressive of thought and ideality.

He met friends at Lake George who did not fail to rally him upon his altered demeanor, and to detect a family likeness in his pictures, but as to who the heroine of his canvas and meditations might be they were totally in the dark, and Pennon took no pains to enlighten them either as to the beauty of the Tiber Creek Valley or the cottage that nestled therein; neither how, like Jacob, he had met a Rachel at the well, and had afterward kissed her, and lifted up his voice and wept, not because of having kissed her once but because he was never to have that joy again. These things he kept scrupulously to himself, and teasing only made them retreat closer into his spirit. Eyes profane might never look into the holy of holies reserved to them.

As we have hinted before, Pennon was a great favorite. He had a peculiar power of "winning golden opinions from all sorts of people"—perhaps because his own nature was so truthful and affectionate. Even at Mrs. Butterby's it had been guessed by his fellow-boarders that they owed an extra allowance of ounces of white sugar and fresh butter to his presence at table. Their landlady was a woman in the scales of whose soul, prudence and the love of peace outweighed justice and the love of her kind; but Pennon had jumped boldly into the lighter balance and brought it level with the other, which may be set down as one of his most surprising triumphs.

One morning he had a letter which he read upon the portico of the hotel.

"Well, Pennon, what news—good or bad?" asked his friend Noyse, who saw a change pass over his countenance.

"Most people would think it good news. You have heard me tell of that eccentric old bachelor who spent his whole fortune of two hundred thousand dollars upon fifty acres of land, and a castle which he built in its midst, living thereafter in it, solitary, like a spider in the center of his web of glory. I believe I was almost the only human being he ever fancied, after the young lady deceived him, who was the ruin of one of the most splendid of men. Well, he is dead, and has left me his castle and surroundings."

"Whew! most people would call that pretty good news. You were born with a gold spoon in your mouth, my dear friend. There is no use in your friends standing by and coveting the delicious morsels you fish up with it."

Pennon heaved a deep sigh.

"How little is known of people's real fortunes—the fortunes of the heart—whether they are good or bad. I assure you, Noyse, I am not to be envied."

"Yet I'd e'en take the burden of that little love affair upon my spirits, for the consideration of your good looks, good gifts, and good luck."

"Pshaw! love affair!" muttered Pennon.

"To be sure it is strange that you could be unfortunate in love, unless the lady of your choice be dead. But if it is not that, what is it that keeps you so low-spirited, eh?"

"Indignation, perhaps. Let us think of this new turn of the wheel, Noyse. What do you say to making up a party of our friends here, three or four of them, and going up to St. Ceil to look at the castle, and to stop awhile if we like it?"

"Glorious! Now that you speak of it I shall be impatient until we start."

"Very well, then. We will have Fenelon and his beautiful wife—"

"And her still more beautiful sister."

"Yes; and that is all. I know they have nothing to do but idle away the summer, and if they are ready we will start to-morrow."

On the 12th of July the party of pleasure selected by Pennon, having traveled for thirty-six hours by rail and boat, were left by the great steamer which daily furrowed the waves of the St. Ceil, on the dock of a little village several miles from the estate they were in search of.

The travelers had heard glowing accounts of the scenery between the village and the castle—as the proprietor had named his mansion—and learning that a ferryman could be procured to row them slowly to their destination, they preferred this more romantic manner of reaching it. The afternoon was fine. As they glided out into the middle of the broad, fair river, they felt upon their brows the refreshing coldness of a breeze sweet-scented with the northern pines. The banks sloped gently down to the water, and were green with waving grass, and dotted often with groups of elms. Here and there one of those stately trees bent close to the river's brim.

As the boat shot murmuringly along, leaving a golden trail, the grassy slopes rose into wooded heights or sunk into romantic vales.

While they were all gazing at a hill, which ought, perhaps, to be dignified as a mountain, standing solitary before them at about a distance of a mile up the stream, their attention was drawn away by a glimpse of turrets, domes, and battlements rising from among a forest of trees midway between them and the light.

"The castle! the castle!" exclaimed all.

Rosalie Sloane sprang to her feet.

"Sit down, love," said Mrs. Fenelon, the matron of the party, albeit she was but twenty-four years of age. "You will upset the boat, and then what would become of us?"

"Why, the gentlemen would rescue us, I suppose. It would do no harm to tax their gallantry a little more, just so that they need not forget that they are expected to be chivalrous," and Rosalie turned her bright blue eyes half-reproachfully, half-laughingly upon Pennon.

She had thought his demeanor too abstracted—she was not wont to be less than the absorbing interest when she was present among gentlemen; and that day she had acted her prettiest, and been treated with only the most courteous politeness, without one stolen glance of sentiment, one repressed sigh, one tone made thrilling with deeper meaning than the words confessed—and she thought, as she turned her face to the other side of the river, and pouted her rich, red lip, that it was "too bad!"

"It must be magnificent! I had no idea it was so fair. I wish we could get a more satisfactory view of it," burst forth Noyse, striving to pierce with his eager glance the depths of foliage which protected the castle from view.

Just then an opening in the foliage revealed a wing and part of the main body of the building. Every one uttered an exclamation of delight; but the boat swept on so rapidly that it vanished before they realized its beauty.

It seemed to be something in the style of the old Moorish palaces; and yet not that, being more lofty and elegant. It was a mixed architecture, but planned by some one of original genius, for it was very beautiful as a whole; to be compared, perhaps, to a warm and passionate love-song, translated from the Italian into words of solid English splendor, and breathed to a proud but tender English beauty. So it seemed to Pennon, but the comparison is surely absurd.

"It is not like any thing that I ever saw upon the Rhine or in Italy, or in England either," remarked Noyse, who was a great talker, and always interrupted those silent moments of enchantment which people of more sentiment keep sacred. "I have never seen any thing precisely like it in any book of drawings. I wonder why he called it the castle? It is not grand nor glowing enough for such a title. I should think—"

At that moment the boatman turned the skiff to the shore, and they were in full view of the place, and in front of an avenue leading up to the hall. Soon Pennon stood upon a block of gray marble placed as a landing at the foot of the avenue, and was helping the ladies out.

The party were disposed to be very gay, but the thought of the dead friend who had passed there the last years of a useless and disappointed life, saddened Pennon.

"Love shall not ruin me as it did him," he muttered.

"Which way?" cried Rosalie, tarrying for him, while the others, all curiosity, lost themselves in the winding paths which branched off from the main walk.

She had taken off her bonnet, and her light hair glistened with a golden tinge in the sunlight; her form was tall and full; her step had something languid and yet majestic in it; her complexion was as delicate as lilies and wild roses.

"Her cheek is fair, with just as much  
Of color as would be.  
Suppose a moist moss-rose should touch  
A lily lovingly."

"Her hair like wavy silk seems spun  
By fairy worms, which fed  
Upon the gold rays of the sun,  
And gilded thus the thread."

She was a fine-looking, fascinating woman. Pennon realized it as he quickened his steps to meet her. She looked, even there, queenly enough to be

"Going to St. James's Court  
In beauty and in state;"

and he thought how well she would grace one of those fashionable homes which she coveted. She was not wealthy, and her friends were desirous she should make a brilliant match. This she could have done more than once, but it was so pleasant to be admired that she was in no haste.

A glow of exultation made her heart thrill as she waited that instant for the guidance of her host. She had long been yielding to an interest which she felt in him, and the idea of being mistress of such a home as she saw before her put the finishing perfection upon his attractions. She, as well as her sister and brother-in-law, had taken this invitation as a mark of particular favor toward her; though, if they had known the truth, they need not have built much hope upon it, for it was more to please Noyse than himself that Miss Rosalie Sloane made one of the party.

"We shall reach the house easily by this way," said Pennon.

They followed a labyrinthine walk, shaded by numberless varieties of trees, some towering loftily, others bending beneath a weight of fruits or flowers. They had glimpses of fountains, grottoes, fanciful summer-houses, and statues occasionally in lonely nooks. Birds warbled as if in their own native wildernesses; for the solitary owner of all this splendor had disturbed their reveries but seldom; falling waters murmured in marble basins.

"How sweetly one might live and die in a place like this," almost whispered Rosalie. "Oh, I love such beauty as this."

"You love beauty, I know," answered Pennon, with a smile; "for you love your own dear self; which is only what the rest of the world does also—loves you more than you deserve."

She did not know whether to be pleased or pro-

voked at this speech. She wanted to say something which should draw from him the innermost meaning of his remark—perhaps to induce him to say that he, like the rest of the world, was her lover; but Noyse, uneasy and jealous, was waiting for them, and they joined him.

They advanced to the lawn where Mr. and Mrs. Fanelon were awaiting them, entered upon a stately portico, and from thence passed into the principal hall, whose stained glass window, floor of white and black marble in mosaic, lofty ceiling, and grand stairway excited still further their admiration.

There were but two servants about the mansion—a faithful old man who had charge of affairs generally, and his wife, who acted as housekeeper.

"Oh, dear!" said Pennon, as they rested themselves in the hall, before seeking rooms, "I am afraid that my friend's gift will impoverish me. I can never afford to keep up such an establishment; and out of respect to the wishes of the dead I should never wish to sell it."

"Ah, you can afford it better than you think," said Rosalie. "This place is not so large as it is richly furnished. A very few servants would keep it in proper order. It will take but a trifling expense to keep up the grounds."

"You talk like a housekeeper—that is, like one who has some idea of domestic expenses and arrangements, as every woman ought to have," said Noyse.

"That is, if she marries a poor man."

The slight, very slight accent of scorn with which this was said, considering that Noyse was not by any means a rich man, was poor consolation and reward for following in the train of the brilliant coquette for the last two months. The color suffused his face, for he felt too deeply to entirely conceal his feelings, and thus be less at the mercy of her who would have been kinder had she doubted her power.

Before any one spoke again the housekeeper entered to receive orders and conduct the ladies to their rooms. Pennon gave her liberty to send to the village and procure such help as she needed in waiting upon his guests. She was dressed in deep mourning, and appeared very sad; but her new master evidently made a favorable impression, and she went out looking more cheerful than when she came in.

In a few moments apartments were ready for the ladies.

"Oh, how charming! how perfectly entrancing!" exclaimed Rosalie, as she entered the one allotted to her. "If I was the mistress of it!" she murmured, as she threw herself into an easy chair. "I must be—I will be! and when Rosalie Sloane says 'I will,' then the thing must come to pass!"

She arose and approached an immense mirror, which reached from floor to ceiling, and was set between the drapery of the windows overlooking most lovely scenery. Then she gazed upon her own loveliness with as much interest as if it were new to her, when, if the truth must be told, she spent many an hour in that same agreeable occupation. That the result was, as usual, satisfactory, might be told by the rich smile gathering about the full corners of her red mouth, and beaming out, lustrous and dewy, from the long, half-drooped, languid lashes shadowing her blue eyes.

The draperies of her apartment were of rose and amber-colored stripes, shaded down into a white ground, which produced a very soft light and elegant effect for a chamber-room. The furniture was tasteful, corresponding in all things, and fully fine enough to awaken the covetousness of the luxurious beauty.

"I shall keep this room for my own, when I am mistress of the mansion," she whispered, as she began to lay out articles for a fascinating toilet in which to make her appearance at tea. "Dear! what shall I do for help before the maid arrives?"

Pennon, when he was left alone by his retiring guests, walked back and forth through the hall.

"My friend little thought, when he left me this, that he was making a fitting choice of one whose necessity I would be to follow his example of celibacy; or, what were worse, to marry some woman to be mistress of his house, when his heart goes not with his hand and name. This latter shall never be. I will not add my own to the frightful list of unhappy or selfish or unprincipled marriages. I have dreamed of a marriage of soul and hearts—a union of the noblest and most spiritual—one purpose, one love, one hope for the future—a marriage as blissful as never ending—a marriage for to-day and not the less for eternity. Oh Clematis! why didst thou disappoint me in this dream? Wast thou cold? coquetish? wayward? I cannot decide. I only know that thou didst cruelly destroy the hope that I had built from thine own sweet, spiritual smile. If I did not see love in thine eyes, such as my soul wildly craved—if I did not see love in thy blush, and hear it in thy voice, then indeed did my self-approbation make me blind and deaf. Why am I ever living over in memory the moment when thy refusal fell like a stone upon my heart?—like a stone above a grave, it lies there never to be lifted—"

His melancholy reverie was interrupted by the fall of the lightest foot, the rustle of the richest silk, and looking up he met the smile of Miss Rosalie Sloane, as she swept, in the charm of her fresh toilet, down the magnificent staircase.

#### CHAPTER VI.

CAUGHT IN HER OWN NET.

"To-morrow the week which we had proposed to stay is out," said Pennon, at breakfast one day. "I have come to the conclusion that no cooler, more retired, and comfortable place in which to endure the heats of August, can be found. If the rest are



of my opinion, we will delay returning to the world for a month yet; and, for fear that *ennui* will seize upon my fair friends, I will write for a little more company—that is, if there is any room for them. How is it, Mr. Fenelon? I gave you the duty of ascertaining our resources."

"There are two chambers, well fitted up, which are vacant."

"How delightful you are, Mr. Pennon," cried Rosalie, in her most silvery voice. "I came very near to wasting a tear upon an anticipated farewell to this lovely spot, this very morning, before I came down. Now I will save it for some other occasion."

"That is well. You have none too many in store, and ought to keep them for some occasion when tears seem absolutely necessary. Now, if ever desperate, rejected suitor should commit suicide, you would not do like Thackeray's heroine—

"Charlotte, when she saw his body  
Borne before her on a shutter,  
Like a well-conducted person,  
Went on cutting bread and butter."

I do not think so badly of you as that. I sincerely believe that under such circumstances you could force that tear which you came so near shedding this morning—just for its becomingness, if nothing more."

"One never knows when you are in earnest, Mr. Pennon," she rejoined, with a charming pout. "I am sure I do not think grief is so very becoming;" and she looked over at Noyse, who seemed to be blessed with a poor appetite.

Her taunt was more severe than witty, for she had had the triumph of refusing him on the previous evening. He was not a fool, nor without considerable spirit, although she had blinded, bewildered, deceived and scorned him. He lifted a half-angry and contemptuous glance, and gazed at her more steadily than passion had ever allowed him to do hitherto.

"If Lady Rosalie Sloane ever expects to see my body 'borne before her on a shutter,' she is laying up tears to dry for want of use. It would be folly to give one's life for an offering to vanity, false-heartedness and capricious beauty."

"How do you dare, sir? One would indeed guess you to be an unfortunate suitor."

Her cheek flushed with indignation.

"I should not dare to accuse you of caprice or falsehood," he answered, with the most malicious coolness, "if I did not remember, too well for my own peace, the light in Rosalie's eye, the smile and blush in her cheek, when we sat to rest after climbing that rock at Lake George; and when, emboldened by her soft and tender look, I—"

"Mr. Noyse!"

Her face was pale and her look imploring.

"Turned to press the purest kiss of love upon a lip I thought as pure, and in that moment tasted happiness which is now to thrill me with an unsatisfied longing forever."

She burst into tears and left the room. Mrs. Fenelon followed her; Mr. Fenelon muttered "villain!" and went out upon the balcony; Pennon followed Noyse to the front portico, and found him leaning, pale and exhausted, against a pillar.

"How could you take so unmanly a revenge upon the poor girl?" he asked, almost sternly, of his friend.

"God knows I am sorry! I would apologize, but the mischief is done. I suppose it was base of me; but the truth is that I was afraid for you, too, Pennon—afraid that she would play off the same arts upon you that she did upon me, and I like you too well to see you made a victim of. If you could have heard her laugh last night, when I called that scene to mind in proof that I had received encouragement to make the avowal which I did—if you had heard her laugh, Pennon, you would not blame me!"

He almost ground his teeth together.

"No doubt you have been very much outraged, Noyse; but you see you have spoiled our party, unless this matter is made up. You need not have feared for me, my friend; not that I do not acknowledge the beauty of Miss Sloane, but I read her character long ago; besides, I have—"

He paused without finishing the sentence. Neither of the gentlemen guessed how very sharply the arrow had pierced into the supposed invulnerable heart of Rosalie; for that heart had become fully fixed upon the owner of the castle, and she knew that truth the most scrupulous and modest the most pure were qualities which, above all others, he admired in women. Her mortification was extreme enough to gratify the fiercest malice. Poor Noyse! he was capable of blazing up with spirit and pride upon occasion, but he himself suffered too deeply, and loved too much, not to regret the consequences of his resentment.

The whole party was placed in an awkward situation. Noyse's going away would scarcely better the matter; and Pennon was put to his wit's end to restore peace and contentment to his guests. While Rosalie was yet up-stairs, shedding burning tears of mortification, and studying upon what step to take to do away with the impression made, he wrote to some friends to join their party.

"I can not go to Pennon and tell him the accusation was false, for it is true," mused she; "much less can I tell him that I am hardly as heartless as I seem, and give the real reason for the change in my conduct. Oh, that odious, that hateful Noyse! I was very near loving him once; I thought I loved him when I permitted him to kiss me, certainly; but the next day Pennon came, and—and—my feelings changed. But I can not tell him so."

It was very much as she said. Noyse was of a good family, fair-looking, with some noble qualities

of head and heart, although rash and impetuous; and Rosalie was really so much in love, that she was willing to leave a large fortune out of his attractions, and accept him without it, when Pennon made his appearance. Considering that she had been educated to regard wealth as indispensable, it was a proof that some true womanly feeling still bloomed beneath the artificial flowers in her heart's pasture that she had been so near to taking a man of such moderate means. Love was near to triumphing over lucre, when Pennon, with both fortune, family, and innumerable other endowments, unfortunately chanced too near; then, in order to free herself from her more than half-committal to Noyse, she had been obliged to act with more duplicity and more heartlessness than was natural even to her. Now she was reaping, in the bitterness of humiliation, the harvest she had sown.

While she was yet weeping, her sister knocked at the door.

"How meanly Mr. Noyse has conducted himself," she said, as she entered and threw her arms about Rosalie. "Just tell me, my love, that what he said was not true, and I will inform Pennon of your word immediately."

"But it was true, Bertha. I did not mean to deceive Mr. Noyse, for indeed, indeed I thought I loved him at that time. But when I saw Pennon I—"

"Yes, dear, I know. And you chose very wisely, too. I shall tell our host that you did believe that your affections were engaged to his friend, but that you discovered that he had a bad temper."

"Oh, Bertha!"

"He has, darling. Did he not prove it this morning? I am so glad that you escaped the fate of being his wife. Besides, something must be done. I will not tell any falsehoods, but I will make this matter as near right as it can be made. So cheer up, darling."

Mrs. Fenelon kissed her sister, and went with her pretty face and winning ways, to smooth over all discrepancies to Pennon. She was not strictly conscientious in all she said—but she loved her sister, and that was the way they were educated. She made out a very good case for Rosalie's interest in the noble qualities of Mr. Noyse, her willingness to marry without much fortune, etc., etc., until she found out his sudden and dangerous fits of temper, and was afraid of unhappiness, etc.—all of which her host heard with politeness and kindness; said Noyse had been rude; was ready to apologize; hoped the ladies would accept his friend's excuses, and all would be happy again, for he had some bright plans for the coming month, and wanted all to participate in them.

So with the offender's apologies, and his host's entreaties for him, Mrs. Fenelon went back to her sister.

Rosalie came down to dinner looking most queenly. The superb dignity of her air was just softened by the flash of tears which still lingered upon her cheeks and gave new brilliancy to her eyes. It would have seemed profanity to have treated such a being with any thing but tender admiration; and Noyse wondered how he could have been such a brute, even with the memory of yesterday ringing in his ears.

#### CHAPTER VII. THE MYSTERY.

A WEEK or two more had sped away; new guests had arrived at the castle, and the most of them were going out one morning upon a boating excursion.

"We seem to be living in the days of the Arabian Nights; everything is like enchantment here," said Lulu, a child of thirteen, who was one of the new arrivals.

Pennon was fond of children; and most always had some little girl for an especial pet.

On their way to the water, they passed through the garden, and from thence into a grotto, the entrance to which was nearly concealed by the jasmynes which clambered over its rocky sides. Making their way into this, they heard the river dashing with a sound almost like that of the sea against the rocks at their feet, which had been cut down into convenient steps; and at the bottom of which, glittering in the sunshine into which they again emerged, they saw the boat.

It lay upon the water graceful as a swan. A gilded seat, lined with crimson cushions, ran around it. The sail was of snowy linen, edged with a crimson cord, and a small silken banner of the same color, and striped with gold, floated from the top of the mast.

"Do you not think it a romantic boat-house?" asked the host of Rosalie, as they stole out swiftly from the shadow of the grotto.

"Every thing is romantic here. How strange that your friend should have built himself a palace like this for the selfish pleasure of enjoying it in solitude."

"He was not a selfish man," said Pennon, "or did not mean to be. He was unfortunate. Perhaps when he planned this place he expected to make a paradise of it by sharing it with the woman he loved. But ladies are sometimes fickle."

Rosalie looked over the side of the boat into the water.

The south wind, balmy from the blooming shores, blew them along until the spray which broke away from the prow glittered like a wreath of jewels hung around it.

The scenery seemed to the sailors more picturesque than that below the castle. The mountain, covered with pines, stood on their right; on their left were sloping banks with groves growing down to the water's edge.

There was a bend in the river where it swept around the base of the hill, and as the boat followed its course, the party came in sight of a small island lying sweetly on the bosom of the stream.

Pennon had told them nothing of it, though he had visited it himself a day or two before, wishing to surprise them.

"That is the 'bright little isle' of which Moore speaks, I expect, from its appearance," he said, "and there we land for an hour or two of exploration. No poet ever yearned for a sweeter spot."

"Here a leaf never dies in the still blooming bowers, And the bee banquets on through a whole year of flowers."

All eyes were attracted to it as they approached.

Underneath the trees, which arose in lofty groups, they could see shadowy vistas, pleasant with moss, grass and flowers. They were welcomed by a golden burst of harmony from countless, bright-winged birds fluttering amid the swaying branches and darting their bills into the fragrant bells of blossoms.

Every one was eager to spring upon the shining sand, which lay like a girdle of gold about the island. Pretty shells, some of which Lulu gathered hastily in her straw hat, peeped up on the shore; but no one could stop at that moment to aid her selection, for the cool shade wiled them on to their protection; while the murmurs of the leaves overhead, the carols of the birds, the rushing of the river, together with the perfume of flowers, made the air dreamy with sweets.

They had not gone far into the island before they discovered, sheltered in a thick forest, the fanciful roof of a summer-house. They drew near, admiring the slender pillars and the curious lattice-work which covered four of its octagon sides, the other four being open to the breezes and the birds; and also the meeting of the lofty branches of the oaks above its gilded minaret. Upon entering it, they found oaken sofas placed against each lattice, and a round table standing in the center. They were just wearied enough to sink contentedly upon these seats.

The outside of this pretty pagoda was overrun with tartarian honeysuckles, whose sweetness at evening would have been overpowering; but now it was delightful, not only to the people within, but to a swarm of wild bees, that, happy as the bees of Hybla, sung and swarmed without.

Rosalie was first to notice a book lying open upon the table. She took it up and found it to be a volume of Bryant's poetry, open at the "Forest Hymn."

"Some one has been here before us," she said, "some one possessing taste, for there could not be a more appropriate place for the reading of this noble hymn," and she read aloud, with exquisite emphasis, a few lines; then, carelessly turning the leaves, she came to the name of the owner inscribed on the blank first page—*Clematis Percy*—quite a pretty cognomen.

No one noticed the sudden pallor of Pennon upon hearing the name of the woman he loved, thus unexpectedly spoken. He arose and began plucking the honeysuckles from the vine outside, while endeavoring to regain his composure.

"For whom are you binding that oppressively sweet garland?" asked Rosalie, following him.

"For Lulu," he answered, throwing the golden wreath about a head as golden. "There, pretty one, run and see if old Galleon is in sight—I know you are hungry."

"Yes! there he comes, tugging a basket as big as himself," laughed the little girl, bounding back a moment after.

Galleon was the purveyor-general, who followed the party in a craft of his own, having in charge a cargo of dainties fit for fair ladies and brave men to refresh themselves with on an occasion like the present. The summer-house, with its convenient table, was willingly resigned to him for the time being, while the party dispersed itself amid the groves as inclination led. Rosalie could do no better than get up a pretty romp with Lulu; for Pennon was absorbed in that stupid book which she wished the unknown woman had not been so forgetful as to leave; and Noyse was paying back her past conduct in her own coin—since the new arrivals he had left her to himself—try as artfully as she might, she could not perceive that she retained a fraction of her power over him.

Sitting at the foot of an elm, the host forgot his company, in the whirl of conjectures which danced through his brain. Whence this book? Did spirits bear it bodily through the air, and deposit it in this lonely island to remind him of that far-away being whom he still loved, despite of her rejection of his suit? Or was Clematis herself so near to him that he had but just missed seeing her? Had she been here? What could have drawn that quiet farmer's daughter to this remote and almost unknown region? He was in a maze of perplexity. He turned every page, as if he would read therein the answer to his questions—but the book would not tell him what he wanted to know. "De luncheon is ready to sarb," said the swart Galleon, gleaming out of the pagoda, as turbaned servants gleam out of the pagodas of the Orient.

"Blow the horn, then," ordered the host. "Hav'n't you a tin horn, or a cow-bell, Galleon?"

"Blow the hugay,  
Beat the gonguin."

"Hav'n't no tin horn, massa, but I'se a tin pan here, and dis squelcher what I made de lemonade wid."

"Rattle away, then;" and the unmusical music of



the tin pan reverberated through those enchanted forest aisles, frightening bee and bird, bough and blossom, into silence.

The group chattered like magpies over their cold fowl, their sandwiches, ambrosial wines and iced sweets—all but the host, who said as little as he ate, which was little enough. Rosalie noted these signs, almost hoping they were the tokens of his having been seized with an affection of the heart, which was, indeed, true, though the cause was far removed from any apparent source.

As soon as he could, without rudeness, slip away from his guests, Pennon started and roamed over every foot of the island; he half expected to meet the vision of a fair young girl, as mute as death but as lovely as light, flitting underneath the shadows, or wandering on the beach.

But nothing so unlikely as this occurred. Having searched the groves, he kept silently along the silvery sand which edged the shore, looking up and down the river with a yearning gaze, as if something were yet to be revealed to him.

Suddenly, something glimmered at his feet; a sun-beam struck it, and it flashed out into thousands of fiery sparkles. He stooped and picked it up—it was the Emerald Necklace!

Robinson Crusoe, when he came upon the footprints of the savages in the sand, was hardly more astounded, though not so pleasantly so. Unseen by any but the approving eyes of Mother Nature, he pressed the treasure to his lips, holding it up again and again to assure himself of its identity. Yes! the same—even to the still unmingled links, whose feeble hold had been severed by the lightning. Mysterious jewels! ever to play some sad, or strange, or inexplicable part in the drama of life. How came they there?

The gorgeous circlet, flashing in the sunlight, seemed to work upon him a dreamy spell. He thought of the snowy throat they had circled—whose warmth they had felt—whose softness they had kissed—he thought of the lovely sufferer, stricken dumb by that tongue of midnight fire!—how patient she had been—how beautiful in her affliction. Ah! he would have wasted his life in serving her, and making her mute misfortunes more bearable!—but she had gently, but firmly sent him from her.

Here was evidence in plenty that she had been near—or if not herself, then the very witches had been! and this was hardly the era of necromancy.

There was something to awaken superstition in the mystic, glowing, wavering flash of the gems.

"How beautiful! how magnificent!" It was the voice of Rosalie who spoke; she had followed Pennon, weary of the time where he was not, and had found him lost in a dream over the necklace, which he held to the rays of the declining sun. "It is not possible you have found any thing so rare as this, in this wild spot, Paul?"—it was nearly the first time she had ever called him by his first name, and she spoke it now very tenderly. "Why! they are superb, those emeralds! it would give Tiffany & Co. a glow to see them. Let me examine them, will you? The setting is very antique, very. It has rusted apart in places, from age, although of the purest gold. They must have lain here ages, as you might say."

"I do not think they have been here long, Miss Rosalie."

"Oh, they certainly must have been here forever! The Indians never made any such ornaments. They must have been buried with some princess of a race long since extinct, who lived in a splendor like that of ancient Peru; and now the river has worn into the shore until it has washed this trinket from her grave. I always preferred emeralds to all the other precious stones. Those must be worth quite a little fortune."

She did not return them to Pennon. She stood, fingering them, admiring them by word and by look. Her whole attitude said, "Give them to me!"—her eyes were full of a covetous fondness, and a smile rested on her face. She knew that the young man was generous, and as he had no near female relatives to need such a bauble as this, it seemed to her quite proper and probable that he would say—

"Keep it, my dear Miss Rosalie. I have no use for an article like that, myself." But Pennon had no such idea. Reaching out his hand for the gems most reluctantly resigned, he thrust them into his vest pocket without saying another word about them; and vexed at her disappointment and at his abstraction, Rosalie was glad when they came in sight of the rest of the party.

"We shall hardly reach home by five o'clock, if we do not embark immediately," said Pennon, springing into the fairy bark, and gallantly stretching forth a hand in aid of the ladies. "The cook cautioned me not to keep dinner waiting, unless we wished to spoil it."

Hardly had the boat shot out into the stream, its crimson-corded sail and golden-striped pennant fluttering in the sunshine, and its passengers full of mirth and vivacity, when they were passed, at a safe distance, by one of those huge steamers which plow our western and northern lakes and rivers. A shout of admiration burst from the crowd of passengers upon her decks—almost all of them being out to enjoy the beauty of the day—at sight of the strange and beautiful little vessel which belonged to the castle. Their shout was answered back with one as merry if not so great, and there was a flutter of handkerchiefs among the ladies on either side.

What possessed Pennon? He had started up so recklessly as almost to upset the boat, and was waving his handkerchief wildly, as long as the steamer could be discerned. Then he sat down silently, saying not a word, till the bark was moored in the fairy grotto.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### UNDER THE CATALPAS.

THE long hours of a hot summer afternoon were almost intolerable to Rosalie Sloane. Not because of the heat and languor of the atmosphere, for she flourished in the summer-time like a magnificent white lily; but this afternoon was wearisome to her because she was disappointed and desponding. Pennon was walking up and down an avenue of catalpas, as if there were no other person in existence except himself—she could see him from her window. Every time she crossed and recrossed the length of her apartment, she would pause by the fluttering curtain, and steal a glance at the form pacing slowly forward and back in the shadow of the trees. At the opposite end of her room was an object equally interesting, at which she also took a lingering glance at every turn of her solitary promenade—her own image, revealed in the tall pier glass.

In vain she questioned the rosy shadow of her own lips, why they had no power to allure him from the silence which he seemed to prefer—in vain she asked her own blue eyes why their soft and swimming depths held no mysteries for him to study—there came no satisfactory response to her deeply-vexed spirit.

Rosalie was in an uncomfortable mental predicament. Nothing but the subtle art which gifts such women with unfailing grace would have made it tolerable. Her relations with Noyse could not be pleasant; she knew that he read her purposes as in an open book; a jealous, yet scornful spectator of every advance which she made toward a rival who was, in turn, most mortifyingly indifferent to her.

She thought it all over as she paced her room until she fairly struck her forehead with vexation, grinding the heel of her toilet-slipper into the carpet in a dangerous way. Rosalie—indolent as a water-lily lolling on the bosom of a stream in the sunshine—aroused herself to vow that matters should come to a crisis.

Again she looked in the glass. A half-blown crimson rose flowered in a little vase upon the table; she placed it in the sunshine of her hair; her dress, white, of the softest, snowiest India lawn, profuse in its folds, light as the breeze which waved it, was already perfection. Stay! that scarf of amber-colored gauze—she fastened it over the back of her head with a turquoise pin, catching it up over one lovely bare arm from which the loose, flowing sleeve swept away like the wing of an angel.

She was going to meet Pennon—by accident. Floating down the broad staircase like an incarnate thistle-down, she wafted herself out into a side avenue, from which she wandered to the river's edge, through a thicket of roses, out upon an open lawn, around and about, until she came into the catalpa walk, from a direction opposite to the castle.

"Why, Mr. Pennon, you out this sultry afternoon?"

"You do not look as if the August sun disturbed you any, Miss Sloane. You look as cool and fresh as a pearl just out of the depth of the sea—as cool."

"As a cucumber," said Rosalie, forcing a laugh, for it seemed to her as if he were going to say—"cool and calculating"—"you know I love the summer fervor of this month—it suits me. I enjoy life the most fully now; every moment is precious. I've been in the thicket of roses down by the water. My dress has caught their kisses as I passed; but they are flying, the roses are. They will soon be gone."

"And then we must go, too."

"Ah! why can we not live in paradise forever. Why was not this castle built in some clime of perpetual summer, near by the fountain of truth, so that we could sip of its waters, and consider ourselves summer-guests forever—never to be disenchanted—never to come down to breakfast some morning with a shiver, and hear the lord of the castle say—'We must fly! here is the breath of winter blighting us.' Why is happiness, Paul, like this rose?" and she scattered its leaves at his feet.

Looking up at him with an air of delicious melancholy, as if she were thinking of the unsatisfactory character of earth, of infinity, and all the sad past and the remote future of love, of passion, of life, and death, and destiny, instead of ten thousand a year, a housekeeper, the new fashions and a new conquest—looking up at him she saw, grasped convulsively in his hand, that mysterious string of emeralds.

It was that, then, she had seen him kiss, from her peeping-place behind the drapery of her window! A shadow, as if a cloud had passed over the sky, fell upon her. She was convinced that Pennon was in love, or had been, with some woman unknown to her. The conjectures upon the subject, when he first came to Lake George, returned to her mind with fresh power. She felt that she had a rival—but was that rival alive or dead? Did Pennon mourn for some lost love consigned to an early grave? She almost hoped so; for in that case, in time, she might console him. While if this mysterious rival were still alive to assert her claims, she was afraid her own chances as mistress of the castle, were narrow. If Pennon had been a man of Noyse's spirit, she would have satisfied her curiosity by asking him outright about the necklace; but she was afraid of Pennon, who had a way of keeping people at a distance when he did not wish them to approach him.

"If our pleasures could be like those emeralds," she continued after a moment, "imperishable, then—"

"Then you would never go away from here?" queried her companion.

"Not if you would let me stay, lord of the castle," she replied, tempering the full meaning of her re-

ply by an appearance of gayety; but a vivid blush broke over her face, at her own boldness, and her glance wavered and sunk beneath his grave look.

She was lovelier in her confusion, than in her usual calm self-possession. Her fingers trembled as she plucked another rose to pieces.

"If I could believe you, Rosalie, I might invite you to stay with me here and hereafter—for now and for eternity. But I think your idea reaches no further than an earthly visit—I would choose a companion for this world and the next. I've some unfashionable notions, I know. What if I should present these domains to my friend Noyse, having but little use for them myself? I never expect to marry, and this castle needs the fairy presence of a woman to charm it."

"Oh, Noyse!" exclaimed Rosalie, bitterly, ready to weep with vexation at Pennon's assertion that he never expected to marry. "You are so unkind to speak to me of him."

"You must forgive the unkindness in consideration of the motive. When I see him so pale, so wretched, so disappointed, I pity him, and wish him possessed of that happiness which you, my sweet lady, and you alone, have the power to bestow. I have known him since we were 'boys together,' and he is worthy of a woman's best love. I recommend you to think twice, before you allow him to go away from here as unhappy as he is now."

"Oh! Uncle Paul, are you here?" I've been looking for you for the last hour!" cried Lulu, bounding from the garden, in that direction.

"And what do you want of Uncle Paul, now?"

"Oh, just to come with me, and look at the fishes, all silver and speckled, which Peter has caught and put alive in the pond."

He took the little hand held out to him, and was dragged away by the dancing child, leaving the proud beauty, tearful and sullen, having gained nothing by her attack upon the citadel, except a recommendation to walk into a citadel already surrendered, and which she disdained to occupy.

## CHAPTER IX.

### DANGER.

MR. PERCY had taken his daughter Clematis to the Sault Ste. Marie, in hopes that the cool winds which blow across Lake Superior and through the northern pines, would restore the sinking energies of a frame which had received a shock too severe for it.

The tour was almost as novel to the father as to the child; it was a rare thing for one of the inmates of the stone cottage to be away from under its roof more than a night or two for a flying visit to some relative.

Now, these two had been absent over a month. They were returning toward their home, less hopeful than when they set out. Clematis had rallied once or twice, and seemed like her old blooming and buoyant self—but latterly she had sunk again, lost spirit and appetite, had been detained at the Sault Ste. Marie by illness over one trip of the boat; and was now making a great effort to keep up and appear well, until she could reach the haven of her mother's arms.

During a pleasant afternoon, the third or fourth of their voyage, she grew so wearied, in her weak state, that, despite of the beauty of the near shores, and the sparkle of the water, which she loved to watch, she was obliged to retreat from the deck to one of the sofas of the cabin, where she dropped asleep over the book which she pretended to read, in order to isolate herself from the uninteresting commonplaces exchanged with great spirit, by the lady passengers.

She was awakened by the stopping of the steamer to wood at a little village dock. She was on the side nearest the shore, and as she looked out of the window with sleepy eyes she saw quite a number of passengers and an immense amount of baggage, waiting on the wharf to come aboard. They were a distinguished-looking party to be gathered together at so remote a little village; and with the curiosity of youth, Clematis raised her head to reconnoiter them.

Just then one of the gentlemen handed a lady across the plank. She was young, beautiful and richly dressed; and Clematis heard her speaking in a voice silvery sweet:

"Wait, Lulu, Pennon will take care of you."

And then she saw who this gentleman was who had assisted the lady onto the boat.

She felt too weak and ill to meet him then and there in the presence of all that company; she knew that she would betray agitation not becoming to her pride, and she arose and sought her state-room with hasty steps, reaching it as the new-comers entered the cabin.

Mr. Percy had likewise seen Pennon enter, although not perceived by him. After the boat was on its way and the late arrivals comfortably settled, he went into the cabin to speak to his young friend.

Pennon met him with a glow of surprise and pleasure, but not without an agitation he was pained to see, for he had heard from his daughter's own lips that she had refused him. They walked out upon deck to have an undisturbed talk.

"How is Mrs. Percy and Clematis?"

"My wife was well when we heard from her last. Clematis is with me! Did you not see her in the cabin?"

"No, I did not. I do not think she was there."

"She has gone to her state-room, probably, to lie down. She is hardly fit to travel, but I am anxious to get home with her."

"Has she been ill?—has she recovered her voice?—what is the matter with her?"

"Thank God, she has recovered her voice, but—"

"Ay, thank God!" murmured Pennon.



"But she has never seemed so well since that unhappy night. I have been traveling with her for her health, but she has failed instead of gained since we left home. We were detained four days at M— on account of her illness, and have just started on our way again."

"I long and yet dread to meet her, Mr. Percy. You know my feeling for her, and that it is in vain. I can not bear to hear that she is suffering. I thought that she looked thinner when I saw her that day in the boat."

"What day can you be speaking of?"

"It is curious, is it not, Mr. Percy?—but we came very near meeting two or three weeks ago. Were you not upon a little island about twelve miles above here on the third of this month?"

"We were. Our boat met with a slight accident and was lying several hours for repairs. We were restless at our detention, and hearing of the beauty of the island, several of us hired a boat and went over. It was on our way up. We had a delightful excursion."

"We were there within half an hour after you left. Did your daughter lose any thing on the island?"

"I heard her speak of leaving her favorite copy of Bryant on the table in the summer-house."

"I found it and will return it to her. You can guess my surprise at seeing her name on the fly-leaf. While wandering along the shore I saw something sparkling in the sunlight. I went to it and found she had lost something of more worth than the poems—that veritable necklace with which my fortunes seem magically to be mixed. I am glad of this opportunity of restoring it, for it is of value."

"I wish she had lost it in the river where it would never have appeared again. I confess to the weakness of beginning to feel nervous about that thing."

Pennon smiled, though rather mournfully.

"I must go and see Clematis," said her father. "I will tell her of your presence on the boat. I believe she will wish to see you. There is no understanding the heart of a woman, sir, but it is my belief—based merely upon my own observations, and, therefore, not to be depended upon—that she refuses the offer of your hand simply because she thought her affliction unfitted her to be the fitting companion of such a man."

"Is it possible, Mr. Percy? No, it can not be!"

"Mind, I do not say it is. I may be entirely mistaken; and of course I do not intend you to build up hope upon it, if you yet wished it so. I only know that Clematis has been another girl since the day you left us. Alas! I fear she will never be the blooming child she once was. I must go and inquire after her."

He went after Clematis, and Pennon returned to his party.

"Who was it you were talking with?" asked Rosalie, as he came back to the group.

She seemed jealous of almost every word and look that others had from him.

"It was a gentleman with whom I am well acquainted. I was glad to meet him," and he relapsed into silence.

He knew that the woman by his side thought or fancied that she loved him, and he had seriously questioned within himself whether he ought not to marry her and secure her happiness, and perhaps his own would come in time. Now a revulsion of feeling had taken place. They had not sat long before Mr. Percy approached them and beckoned Pennon aside.

"Clematis is very ill," he said, in an agitated voice. "I found her in a high fever—delirious. There is no physician on the boat, and we will not reach port until morning. I think she must have seen you. She was just in that nervous and highly excited state when any mental disturbance is too much for the prostrated physical powers. The doctors told me particularly to guard her from excitements."

"Do you think it could have been her surprise at seeing me? What a foolish idea, Mr. Percy! I wish you would let me look at your daughter. I am not unskilled myself in some kinds of diseases, and have nursed many a friend through dangerous diseases. May I go?"

"Most certainly. Ah, I wish her mother were here."

They entered the state-room together. She was tossing upon her little, uncomfortable bed, uttering now and then a moan. Her head was fearfully hot, her cheeks burning. She did not recognize either of them, staring at them a moment with bright eyes, and then restlessly throwing herself upon her pillow. She was enveloped in her tight, warm traveling dress, while the air in the tiny room was oppressive to the last degree. Pennon opened the window and door upon the deck, put a wet napkin upon her forehead, sent the chambermaid for ice—acting with self-possession, though evidently alarmed.

"If it should end in inflammation of the brain!" he muttered; "and it will, without great care. The hand of a woman is needed here. This heavy dress must come off immediately."

He went back to Miss Sloane, who was standing in the cabin door looking off at the fair, green shores.

"Rosalie," said he, "I depend upon you as a friend. The woman I love is lying dangerously ill in No. 18. She has no female friend on the boat. Do for her what you can, and you may ask any thing of me hereafter—my gratitude will not know bounds."

"The woman I love." The blood rushed into his listener's face, and then returned as quickly. Had she been the weak and utterly selfish woman which

her conduct sometimes intimated, she would have failed in the moment of trial.

"I will do all that I can," she said in a tremulous voice. For an instant she pressed her hand on her heart, unseen by him, and then followed him bravely.

With Mrs. Fenelon's help she soon had the unconscious girl relieved of her extra clothing and comfortably attired in her night-dress; had knotted back the bright, entangled curls from her burning brow, held iced water to the thirsting lips, and performed every little act of gentleness which comes ready to a woman's heart and hand.

All that long night three persons sat up with the sick girl. Miss Sloane would not leave her charge except for a few moments of rest, when the father and Pennon would take her place. Almost every other instant the cloths about her temples were dipped in ice water, and her hands and face continually bathed. If she had been a sister, Rosalie could not have been more devoted.

Toward morning the fever was abated, and the sufferer recognized her father. During the night she had called often on his name, and once or twice she had murmured another name, sending a thrill of pain through the heart of her faithful watcher.

At daylight the steamer rested from her toils at her dock in the city of D—. Rosalie, and, indeed, her whole party, proposed to go to the same hotel with Mr. Perry and his daughter; and Rosalie declared her intention of remaining by Clematis's side until her mother could be sent for. Her sister was somewhat astonished by her unusual benevolence, though she and all the others admired it, and interested in the youth and beauty of the patient. None knew the secret of Miss Sloane's peculiar kindness but Pennon.

Wrapped in one of Rosalie's elegant morning-gowns, Clematis was borne to a carriage by her father and Pennon, and drawn as quickly as possible to a hotel, where a room had already been ordered and prepared. She had but little fever until afternoon, and then nothing like as violent an attack as on the previous day. With quiet and good nursing the physician said that the danger of brain fever was averted.

"It was dull for you and your sister stopping here until Thursday," said Pennon to Rosalie, as they walked to and fro in the public parlors that evening.

"Not very dull," she replied cheerfully. "There must be some dullness and sorrow in every life, and after such a visit to an earthly paradise as we have just enjoyed, it is well to be reminded that there is sickness and trouble in the world."

"Rosalie, your care may have saved the life of Miss Percy. She may be nothing to me; she has refused to be to me what my heart demanded, but if she were my wife I should feel under no deeper obligations to you. If you ever need a friend, if you have a wish that I can gratify, come to me. You do not know how much you have grown in my reverence and esteem—how much more beautiful your beauty is to me—how much better I understand and appreciate your character than ever before, though you have always been admired by me. You were like an angel last night, Rosalie! You deserve to be happy. May you always be as brilliant, blooming and beloved as now, and may you make the joy of some heart that is worthy of you."

"Indeed, I have done nothing to merit this outburst of praise," answered the belle, but turning upon him eyes beaming with a melancholy sweetness strange to them. "It would be an angel of darkness who would not do all possible for the sick. However, I had some thoughts last night rather new to my careless heart, and unless I am too weak to detain them, they may lie there until they spring up, blossom, and bear fruit. Life was not given us merely to idle away—do you think it was, Mr. Pennon?"

He smiled as he looked into her earnest face, more lovely for its unwonted expression of seriousness—smiled at the childlike simplicity with which she pronounced the question, as if she had been the originator of it.

"Life is earnest—life is real,  
And the grave is not its goal,"

Longfellow says, Miss Sloane; and it is true, too, though sad, that it is often only through suffering that we grow strong. Life is any thing but a holiday to the most of us, Rosalie."

## CHAPTER X.

### ROSALIE CROSSES THE CHASM.

"Has the omnibus come up from the boat?"

"Yes; I see it now, just stopping before the hotel."

Rosalie was peeping from the blinds of the window in Clematis's room, who was partially sitting up in bed, reclining against a heap of pillows.

"Do you see a lady who looks as if she might be my mother?"

The girl at the window laughed.

"What a question! but, really, there is a lady leaving it that would answer to the description if she were advertised as Clematis Percy's mother. And now I see your father hastening to her—so it must be your mother, and in a moment you will have the pleasure of seeing her."

"Poor mamma! I am sorry they telegraphed to her. What suspense she must have been enduring for the last forty-eight hours."

"Well, now you may know that she is very happy in hearing of your safety and improvement."

"Come here a moment, dear Rosalie."

She went at the summons, and Clematis drew her down to her side, and put her arms about her neck with a kiss.

"I wish to thank you again and again for your sis-

terly kindness to me—me, a perfect stranger to you, until you came to me in my sickness. Oh, I know my mother will love you!"

The door opened just then and Mrs. Percy, her face covered with mingled smiles and tears, advanced rapidly to the bedside.

"My poor child! Oh, I am so thankful—so rejoiced!"

After the first embrace, Clematis said:

"It was cruel to give you so much anxiety, mamma; but I believe I was pretty seriously ill when they sent for you; and might have been so now if it had not been for this lady, Miss Sloane, mother—my friend, my sister, she allows me to call her."

Rosalie held out her slender white hand. Mrs. Percy in taking it burst into tears, and ended by flinging her arms about her.

"Heaven will bless you, my dear mademoiselle."

Rosalie cried a little bit, too, out of nervous sympathy, as well as from a swelling sensation of happiness at heart from hearing herself praised, not for beauty, but for goodness.

"Oh, if they knew what it had cost me, besides a little labor!" she thought, as she brushed away her tears.

Mr. Percy was added to the group who gathered about the bed of the almost recovered invalid. With beaming faces they gazed upon her cheerful countenance, and conversed almost gaily of past danger. There was another who longed to, yet dared not, join the rest, but was doomed to pace restlessly through parlors and halls, his busy thoughts but little diverted by occasional inquiries or remarks from his friend Noyse, who was reading a book by a window.

Noyse was not quite so rollicking as when he left Lake George, and had grown a little thinner; otherwise he seemed contented and tranquil.

Grateful as Mr. Percy felt for the attentions of Miss Sloane to his daughter, he could not help smiling at the friendship which had blossomed into full flower so quickly. Men, slow to make up their minds, acting from prudence or reason, and not from impulse, reserved if not cold, self-possessed and conservative, laugh at the sudden and ardent friendships which spring up between women—especially young women, who have not yet grown to lavishing all the wealth of their natures upon husbands and children. They do not understand it, and are apt to think it weak or ridiculous; but, in fact, it is rather admirable. The want of worldly wisdom, of fear and suspicion, the gushing out of affection seeking some object, the quick sympathy of kindred emotion, the banishment of envy, the confidence, the enthusiasm, are beautiful and becoming to youth and gentleness.

So this new intimacy between the young ladies promised well for their hearts, if not their heads.

After tea the evening passed rapidly away; Rosalie spending the most of it with her friends in their parlor, where the young gentlemen, Lulu, and all, were congregated. Very early, only a little after nine, she bade them good-night, and returned to Clematis's room.

"You must be very weary with your hurried journey, Mrs. Percy, and I have come to send you away for rest. I must stay with Clematis to-night. She does not need any attention now; so I will just take this cot-bed so as to be within call if she should chance to want anything, and shall sleep just as nicely as if I were in my own room. You must make no objections, for to-morrow I must go away, and this is my last night, you know."

So they left the sweet persuader to have her own way.

"Do you feel like sleeping, or are you feverish to-night, darling?"

"Cool and composed, and comfortable as can be," replied Clematis.

"Quite a combination of the c's. Well, then, I will just put up my hair and slip on my dressing-gown, and then I shall be still as a mouse, and you can slumber undisturbed."

"Your gentle limbs you will undress,  
And lay down in your loveliness."

"Do not try to make a Christabel out of me, love; rather give me the part of the lady she entertained. What, if in looking at me, you should suddenly detect the serpent eyes? Are you not almost afraid to let me sleep so near you to-night?"

"Oh, do not speak so, if you please."

"I will not, since I see it makes your flesh creep. I am a naughty nurse, I shall be getting you feverish again. So lie still, and good-night, my dear."

"Good-night," Rosalie.

There was no sound in the chamber for a time, but the soft rustling of Rosalie's silk dress, as she stood by the mirror removing the ornaments from arms and bosom, putting the bright tresses of her hair back from her pearly ears and knotting it up behind, and looking into the reflection of her own eyes, as if seeking there the answer to an enigma.

By-and-by she extinguished the lights and opened the blinds. The moon was at the full, and a soft luster haloed her form as she sat by the window, looking out over the city to a glimpse of water sparkling where the river bounded the town. It was earlier than she usually retired, and she sat a long time, busy with her heart and its destinies.

It was not often that she took so calm and exquisite an hour for meditation; but of late a change had been coming over her moods of action and thought.

The city clock struck for midnight while she sat as if entranced in a fairy ring of moonlight.

"Rosalie, dear, you certainly ought to come to bed. You will take cold."

"Bless me, Clematis, I thought you were asleep hours ago."



"I was asleep a little while, I guess. But I do not feel sleepy now. I keep thinking about Christabel."

"That you must not do, until you are less excitable than now. May I come and lie down by your side? I want to talk to you and make you think of something else, or you will have a fever-dream and deem yourself bewitched."

She crossed the floor and stole into bed with Clematis.

"I would like you to tell me, if you have no objections, why you refused Pennon's hand?"

Clematis gave a little start, and nestled her cheek deeper into the pillow.

"Who told you?" she asked, in a low voice.

"He did. If ever a man loved woman, he loves you. I can not conceive how you could slight such love from such a man, unless you were previously pledged to another."

"To another? No, no! He does not think so, does he?"

"I do not know what he thinks; but I can see that he is wretched. You cast a jewel of the richest price away when you discarded him, Clematis."

The young girl was trembling as she flung her arm over Rosalie.

"I love him—better than life!" she said. "Do you think he cares for me still?"

"His looks and his conduct betray it. If you loved him, why did you send him away from you?"

"Did he not tell you the circumstances of his visit to our house, and the accident which befell me?"

"He told me nothing of any particulars. I should like to hear them, for I am deeply interested in both of you. I part from you to-morrow, and we may not meet for a long time."

With her arms about her listener's waist, and her warm cheek very close to hers, Clematis told, in a softened, tremulous voice, the little history of Pennon's stay with them.

"When he came to me, the day after I was stricken—I had gone down-stairs and was lying upon the sofa, in the parlor, trying to think calmly of my misfortune, and to reconcile my mind to the probable consequences—and made me the offer of love which he did, my first feeling was one of such overwhelming happiness that I entirely forgot my affliction. But when I essayed to speak, then it was forced upon me—and with it the thought of my selfishness in accepting his proffered hand under the circumstances."

"I shall not be able to make him happy," I thought. "He may think so now, when noble pity prompts him to believe that he loves me; but he is proud, and a man of the world. He will not like to introduce a mute wife—"

"There is where you did him injustice, Clematis. He would be proud to prove, in such a loyal way, his devotion to purity and gentleness."

"It was because I loved him so much that I could not bear to purchase my own happiness at the peril of his. I was afraid that I could not be to him the wife that he ought to have; and so I turned away from his offer, while my heart was breaking with its double trouble—not that I felt the loss of my voice as I did of his love. After he left me, I scarcely thought or cared for that, except that it had been the means of parting me from him. Oh, Rosalie! he must see that I have suffered. It has nearly cost me my life."

"And all for a foolish scruple. Unless he had the key to your actions, how could he see in your present illness any connection with your refusal of him? Why did you not write and recall him after the physicians restored your powers of speech?"

"Because I did not know where he was; and I thought—I thought that he had gone away so readily, and never gave me any chance to retract, that perhaps he had discovered that he was mistaken in his sentiments."

"Oh, you little infidel! Pennon would not beg a lady's love. He has so lofty an ideal, he thinks where there is real union of souls, that the woman will feel it as certainly as the man, and not compel him to beseech her forever."

"I did not think there might be. But I had seen so little of the world, and was so—so—"

"Such a timid, self-mistrusting little thing. Now, what if you had lost a lover from want of appreciating your own qualities?"

"Well, I do wonder, even yet, how it is possible that he does not prefer you. You are so queenly; you look so well by his side. Oh, do you know I thought you were his bride when you came on to the boat that day?"

"And so you fell into a fever of despair, which came near being fatal. Pennon love me? Why, you foolish child, I am the last woman he would think of choosing; so do not be jealous of me. I could have told that you would be his ideal, if I had seen you in a crowd. It is you who have the face and voice for him."

"Are you sure he loves me, Rosalie?"

"If he could hear that quiver in your words just as I heard it, and feel your little heart leap up thus wildly as I feel it, do you not think he would be insane with rapture? I am quite sure he loves you; and to pay myself for telling you, I am going to exact a promise from you."

"What is it?"

"That I shall be your bride-maid. There, your blushes are fairly burning the pillow, or else your fever is returning. So good-night, again, darling. Sleep sweet, and be happy."

"I am happy. Good-night, Rosalie."

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE FATALITY DISCOVERED.

ROSALIE arose, the morning after the confession she had won from Clematis, very happy with a pur-

pose which she had in her heart. She could hardly wait for the breakfast-hour which would summon the party together; as immediately after, she intended to impart to Pennon the delighted information she had for him, and thus put an end to the foolish and unnecessary misery of a couple of sentimental young people who seemed trying to understand each other.

But when the breakfast hour had come, Pennon came not. Noyse informed her that his friend had left, on an early train, for the East, being summoned by unexpected business, and had left his farewells for the party to be impartially distributed by himself.

"I am afraid he is troubled about money-matters," remarked Noyse, "he has seemed so moody and restless the last few days; and now his sudden departure seems to argue some difficulty. Artists and poets are always in financial trouble."

"Financial trouble!" cried Rosalie, scornfully. "He has made a fool of himself, as usual!"

"I must say, I am astonished to hear you finding fault with that impersonation of perfection,"—and Noyse looked at her curiously: "am I to attribute this sudden outburst to mortified vanity, at his having deserted you so abruptly?"

"No, Mr. Noyse, my vanity is not in the least hurt," answered she, looking at him without anger.

"Paul Pennon has no longer the power to mortify me, by slighting me, though, I confess, I should like to have his good opinion, and would be proud of his esteem. Haven't your sharp eyes penetrated the mystery yet? So promising a lawyer as yourself ought to have unwound the thread of the little romance played before your very eyes."

"You don't say so!" and the gentleman looked as if he were now beginning to unwind the thread.

"Yes, I do say so. I know all about it. That young creature up-stairs made me her mother-confessor last night; she loves that fly-away hero, but not any more devoutly than he does her. And here, just as I am commissioned to bear a message, as rich with sweets as a bee with honey, expecting to reap the reward which comes from such good actions, behold, the coward has fled. Financial troubles, indeed! I should have painted his face with a glow of everlasting sunshine, if he had waited for my tidings. And now, I suppose, the patient will be having her fever back again, and every thing is at cross-purposes. How tantalizing!"

Pennon had indeed acted like a coward, although a braver nature than his could not be found in an army of heroes. That extreme sensitiveness which belongs to persons of his temperament, and which certainly amounts sometimes to a positive defect, and of which good sense, after a sufficient experience, will sometimes get the mastery, had prevented his making the attempt to ascertain if the illness of Clematis had any thing to do with her feeling for him. Besides, he had too intense an interest in her welfare to allow himself to risk her returning health by any agitating disclosures; he did intend to try his fate again when she should be considered convalescent; but the evening previous to his abrupt departure, he had received a letter from his housekeeper at the castle, announcing that an accident had happened to the steward of the place, who had fallen and injured himself. There was no necessity for his going to see about it, but as he wanted something to occupy his restless mind, he set out on a solitary return to his home, allowing Noyse to infer that he was hurrying on to New York.

Curiously enough Pennon took with him the emerald necklace. It was entirely by accident that he did so. He had intended to give it into Mrs. Percy's hands to return to her daughter; and had placed it in a small box and set it on his toilet-table, that he might not forget to do so. The box, which he had converted into an impromptu jewel-casket, we are obliged to confess, had once contained tooth-powder; and had been fished for the occasion out of the depths of Pennon's trunk. When he came to leave so hastily, the whereabouts of the jewels disappeared from his memory, the tooth-powder was packed up—and it was not until making his toilet, the morning after his arrival at the castle, that he was surprised by the weird, unnatural gems flashing at him, as wicked eyes will sometimes flash, in place of the harmless dentifrice into which the brush was ready to descend.

At that moment those magnificent emeralds looked to him like the living eyes of serpents, and he returned the cover to the box hastily and with nervous trepidation. It was the first time he had ever perceived any thing ominous about them; hitherto they had appeared to him invested with that tender charm given them by the fact of Clematis having worn them about her throat; but now there was something baleful in their green light. A sudden shadow fell upon the cheerful chamber.

When he descended to the solitary breakfast prepared and served with faultless skill by the housekeeper, snatches of old stories and legends kept humming through his head, as hornets will hum in chambers from which they ought to be banished—ugly traditions, all of which had an odor of witchcraft or poisoning about them—of the old Italian eras of treachery and assassination—of the French and English era of love-philts and poisonings—of hideous hags and withered magicians.

In the rich aroma of his cup of coffee he detected the flavor of a love-philts; in the cream-gravy of the *fricassee* chicken was a lurking savor of some subtle poison; the faithful and innocent housekeeper, as she came in with a plate of hot rolls, appeared to him a wrinkled beldam, conspired with spirits for his destruction. Some glamour was over his eyes; he rubbed them, arose, looked at his watch, and took up the morning paper.

"You've not much appetite this mornin', Mr. Pennon."

"Not much; but it will increase, I assure you. The fault, certainly, is not in your cooking. Before I go away, you will have no reason to complain."

"It is very thoughtful of you, comin' because of the steward's hurting himself. Will you stop long this time, sir?"

"I hardly know. A week I shall stay, at all events. The gardens are full of gorgeous flowers; every thing is very beautiful here still; and I do not see why I should not stay. I believe I will set up my easel in the picture gallery and paint something. I feel just like it."

"I trust you'll conclude to do so, Mr. Pennon. It seems a great pity to have nobody here but me and the steward and the chore-boy, and all this great place lookin' so splendid. The old master used to think the fall of the year the best part of it here. He was mighty fond of the forests when they were all turned a-yellow, and of pickin' up the autumn leaves—he liked the dahlias and chrysanthemums, and all the fall flowers, sir. My! but he was a man of taste—and I think you take after him, sir, by your ways. You've minded me of him many times. So you paint pictures, do you? Well said! I'll like to see something you do, sir; and the longer the master is at home, the better we'll all like it. I'm sorry you couldn't eat no more breakfast, Mr. Pennon."

He thanked her for her interest, and strolled out of the breakfast-room into the garden upon which it opened. The September sun was still warm enough for out-door sitting, and he threw himself upon a seat, where the silver flash of a fountain filled his ear, and a thousand brilliant flowers met his eyes. He had the paper in his hand, but he did not read. A daily newspaper seemed as foreign to the scene as a modern advertisement would be, pasted across the forehead of the Egyptian Sphinx. There was a witchery in the soft, yellow sunshine which wove about him like a cobweb. The present receded—time and place. It would not have surprised him to have ascertained that he was a thousand years old, and was dreaming away life in some splendid court of the Alhambra, and that he was thousands of years older still than that, and was eating opium in some eastern garden of roses—a garden, however, in which occasional serpents struck out their fangs from the foliage of the choicest roses. He felt as if danger menaced him, and yet as if a fatal indolence oppressed him—a delicious languor against which it was in vain to struggle. Thus, for a couple of hours, he reclined on the rustic bench, staring at the golden flowers and silvery fountain. Then, with an effort, he stretched himself, arose, walked twice or thrice rapidly up and down the walk, and seating himself again, called himself back to the present reality of things, by a glance at the news-items of his paper. He read the market report as steadily as a produce merchant; and ascertained, to his great enlightenment, that iron was firm, and lead was heavy, that cheese were inactive, and hogs were dull; that flour was rising, and hops were active, that milk cows was steady, and calves were depressed, that pigs were falling, and lard was irregular. Having attempted to digest these interesting items, his eye glanced over into another column, where it fell upon a curious statement of a recent occurrence in Paris, which had, at that hour and time, a powerful fascination for Pennon. The extract read thus:

"All visitors to Paris will have noticed the shops of *bric-a-brac*, or objects of curiosity and *vertu*, so numerous and tempting in that capital. At one of these establishments, in the rue St Honore, a gentleman was engaged a few days ago, in examining an ancient ring for sale there when he accidentally gave himself a slight scratch in the hand with a sharp part of it. He continued talking with the dealer for a short time when he felt an indescribable numbness and torpor taking possession of his faculties, and soon became so ill that the people of the shop hastened to call in a physician. The doctor immediately declared that the gentleman had been poisoned by some mineral substance, applied strong antidotes, and was fortunate enough to relieve the symptoms which had created so much alarm. The ring was then examined by the medical man, who had spent some time in Venice, and who found that this old jewel was what is there called a "Death ring," a class of ornaments in frequent use in Italy during the seventeenth century, when the habit of poisoning was almost universal. Attached to the part of the ring intended to be worn inside the finger were two minute lion's claws, of the sharpest steel, and having clefts in them filled with a violent poison. In a ball or other crowded assembly, the wearer of this fatal ring, wishing to exercise revenge on any one present, would take the victim's hand, and when pressing it, ever so gently, the sharp claw would be sure to inflict a slight scratch on the skin, and the victim would be equally sure to be dead before the next morning. Notwithstanding the length of time which must have elapsed since the poison was secreted in the ring in question, it was still powerful enough to cause great danger, as has been seen, to the gentleman who had so unwarily touched it."

At the moment he ceased reading this statement, a flash of acute pain, sharp and sudden as lightning, spread from Pennon's hand over his body. Upon the first finger of his left hand, a small red spot began to inflame and swell—he examined it closely; it seemed to have been punctured, either by some sharp metal, or by the sting of an insect.

"Pshaw! it is the bite of a spider, or the sting of a bee," he muttered; but as the pain intermitted, only to increase, and began to be excruciating, he felt alarmed.

"Confound that necklace! there's something about the clasp of it that's not right," he exclaimed.



"I remember scratching myself with it when I lifted it out of the box this morning. It shan't be the death of me, however, if there's any virtue in the power of suction"—and applying his lips to the wound, he extracted as much as possible of whatever poison it contained. Then, going to the kitchen, he had the housekeeper wash it with a strong alkali, and bind it over with a poultice of scraped castile-soap.

"No wonder I felt and acted so strangely, this morning," he thought; "it was this mysterious poison working in my veins. I'll go and take some of my *elixir vite*, and see if I cannot shake off the spell. Great Heavens! is it not terrible to think Clematis has been wearing that fatal bauble? I do not believe the lightning struck her at all. I believe it was the benumbing influence of this poison, weakened by its long repose in the water. It is so fortunate that I did not restore it to her mother before I made this discovery."

Having taken some of the *elixir* which he took from a tiny gold vial in his medicine chest, and the pain in his arm having somewhat abated, he set about an examination of the necklace. After what had occurred, he was not very much surprised to find a minute steel claw, similar to the one spoken of as being upon the old Venetian ring, upon the under side of the clasp of the antique necklace. It was so small, and so cunningly disposed beneath the filigree work of the clasp, that it would pass unobserved by any one not purposely searching for it. The curse which that incarnate demon of revenge, Mortimer Monteath, had lain upon the necklace, had been of a very practical character no doubt; the sudden death of the bride to whom he presented it, ages ago, was caused by the silent fangs of this hidden enemy. Although, by Mrs. Percy's account, several of her fair ancestors had met their deaths by accidents for which the jewels could in no way be made accountable, there were several who must have perished by this fatal means. The claw was arranged so that a wound would not, of necessity, be the result of wearing the emeralds, but would be very likely to be inflicted, sooner or later.

Pennon seized a pair of forceps from his dressing-case, and was about to wrench the dangerous clasp from the jewel; but, upon second thought, resolved to leave it as it was, until he had an opportunity of exhibiting to Mrs. Percy the deadly secret of the ancestral gems, and returning them to her, freed from the ancestral curse. So he returned them again to their box, which he put away securely and locked up in a drawer of his bureau, for further safety.

His arm still remained too painful to permit him to think of painting, although the pain was subsiding, and he perceived no dangerous symptoms. The day was one of glorious freshness and brilliancy, and he spent the afternoon wandering over his estate, enjoying its solitude and beauty.

"If Clematis were here!" was the perpetual cry of his heart.

He little dreamed of the consequences of his rash flight to her. He had feared to agitate her by seeking her presence in her sick-room, yet the timidity of his love had forbidden him to dread a far more fatal agitation as the result of his desertion of his party.

When he came in to a late supper, which took the place of his neglected dinner to him, he suffered but little inconvenience from his wound, and partook, with gratifying relish, of the good housekeeper's dainties.

He retired to his room, full of those delightful dreams of youth, in which the aspirations of genius and the glow of passion are mingled—slept, soundly—and arose to work.

Yes! he was going to paint a picture. His subject was chosen, his head, heart and soul ready for the work. He went first to the gallery, which had a skylight, but decided that he liked his own pleasant chamber best, and transferred his easel to that. Before the ruddy blushes of dawn had melted into the full splendor of day, his materials were prepared. The summons to breakfast interrupted him in outlining his picture upon a canvas ready prepared. He partook of a light repast, just enough to invigorate the body without stupefying the mind, and returned to his task with all the ardor which his subject inspired. It was not the fair scenes which lay stretched out before his window which he sketched—it was to him the embodiment of all beauty in a woman's shape—a portrait of Clematis.

How long he had labored he did not know; his hand seemed inspired, and wrought of itself the happiest effects—colors as lovely as he had ever imagined seemed to combine of themselves upon his palette and transmute themselves into the beloved countenance which began to smile upon him from the canvas. Hours or moments, he could not tell which, flitted by; looking up, by the merest chance, in a moment of dreamy abstraction, there, in a chair which stood a short distance from him, sat Clematis herself. She had taken the position of the portrait, its expression, its dress, and was smiling into his eyes with a look of love, so deep, so soft and still—it was like looking into heaven to gaze into those eyes. For several seconds neither of them stirred; the love which he saw so plainly in her look was to Pennon such a surprise and joy, that for the time being he forgot to wonder how she came to be sitting for her portrait there, in his room.

"Clematis!"

He almost whispered her name, in accents touched by his overpowering feelings, but gently as he spoke, his voice alarmed her. She arose from the chair and glided toward the door.

"Stay! stay, I implore you! only a moment until I speak to you!"

She had reached the door, and turned at his cry

smiled upon him with a strange sadness in her smile, and glided out, silent as a phantom. Perhaps it was a phantom! Pennon sprung to his feet and rushed to the door. He caught sight of a shadowy form descending the broad staircase, he heard the faint rustle of a woman's silken garments, and she was gone. He followed down into the hall, but no one was there; he hurried out upon the avenue—no one was in sight; he wandered in every direction, but saw no footprint, nor any trace of any visitor. He stepped into the housekeeper's department and asked her if she had admitted any one to the house, or seen any one walking in the grounds.

"No—not a living soul. Was there robbers about, or what?"

"No robbers. I thought I saw one of my friends in the hall."

She looked at him curiously, for his manner was of a kind to attract attention; he observed it, and tried to appear more natural. After a useless search, he returned to his room and sat down before his easel; but the power to work well had vanished, and he could not recall it. "It was her!—and—no, it was not her—what a fool I am! it was an illusion, of course—yet I am sure it was her." Thus did he contradict himself.

Reason and common sense forbade him to believe that Clematis Percy had actually been in his room; yet those very senses, whose evidence we are wont to accept as conclusive, assured him that she had. He had never seemed to himself to be in a freer, happier, healthier state of mind and body—there was not a single pang left in his wounded finger—he was not a man given to superstitions, and he had never had trances nor walked in his sleep, nor exhibited any tendency toward any extraordinary or phenomenal powers. In vain he took up his brushes—every touch which he gave the picture disfigured it; he saw that he must wait until the spirit moved. He walked about the room, he looked out of the window, he took up a new volume and began to read.

Suddenly the thought came to him that Clematis was dead. He felt cold and faint—as chilled to the heart as if he had touched the marble forehead of a corpse. If that were really she who came to him, then Clematis was *not* dead, for that which he had seen was not a spirit nor an angel—not a holy and beautified spirit—but a woman, pure and sacred as earth can be, but warm, loving, full of the tenderness and sympathy of this world.

Of course it was all in vain that he tormented himself to explain a mystery to which he had no clew. It was midnight before he could compose himself to sleep; but when he did slumber, his rest was profound and dreamless. He awoke with the same elation of spirits which had distinguished his rising the previous day. He felt so impelled to proceed with the portrait, that he resumed his work immediately after the morning meal.

This time he felt no surprise when, having hardly got satisfactorily at his work, raising his eyes, he beheld Clematis again in the chair. Indeed, he had placed the chair for her, feeling sure that she would return. She was looking lovely, her cheeks tinged with faint blushes, her hair falling carelessly about her face and throat, her white dress floating about her like a light cloud. In her bosom she wore a rose and a sprig of myrtle, and a band of plain gold circled either arm.

Pennon was so afraid she would dissolve into air if he spoke to her, that he said not a word, looking alternately at the sitter and the canvas, and working rapidly and with delight. At length he spoke, without thinking of the probable consequences:

"Turn your head a little this way, Clematis."

She obeyed him without speaking, her eyes seeming to ask if it was right.

"Yes, that is it, precisely," painting diligently, but venturing to ask, after a pause—"how came you here, Clematis?"

There was no answer; she looked at him gravely, but made no sign of having heard the question. For half an hour he worked on; then threw down his pallet and brushes, exclaiming:

"Speak to me, dear Clematis, I beg of you. Your silence is so hard to bear. If you are really she whom I love, allow me to tell you again"—but she had vanished—his eloquence relapsed into dreamy silence.

For several days this bewildering experience was continued. Every morning Pennon painted upon the portrait—every morning his sitter came to him, obeyed his instructions, smiled upon him, looked happy, but never spoke; and whenever he attempted to approach her, or implored her to explain to him the mystery of her going and coming, she arose and left him. She always went out by the door and down the stairs like any ordinary mortal, but after she had reached the avenue he could trace her no further. Once, indeed, he had followed her down to the river-bank; but there she had turned and made a gesture, imploring him to follow her no further, and he had turned back at her bidding. Pennon was half distracted by this tantalizing phantom—if phantom it were—sometimes fearing that his mind was affected, yet if it were, he had never worked so well when he was sane. The portrait was a masterpiece of art, astonishing in the exquisite beauty of its coloring and the impassioned life of its expression—it was all that a portrait could be.

It was finished at last; Pennon could invent no further excuse for another touch. He was wretched at the thought, for he felt assured that he should see no more of Clematis. And, strange as it may seem, he had grown so infatuated with her silent beauty, her quiet presence in the chamber, smiling, radiant, delicately robed, that he loved her better thus than ever before. Frequently came back to his mind memories of that time when he had sat in

the old-fashioned parlor of her father's house, painting, listening to her voice, regarding her household ways, and learning to love her. He had been enchanted then, but he was enthralled now. He had many strange fancies about her visits. At times he imagined that she was playing some pretty trick upon him, and he would humor her whim in it; again, that paralysis of her powers of speech had returned upon her, and that she had come to allow him to obtain her image, and then was going away to hide herself from him forever; then again, all these theories would appear so absurd that he laughed at himself. Yet laugh as he would, *the fact was there*. Either Clematis Percy actually came to his room each day, coming in at the door and passing out of it, like any other mortal, and sat to him for her picture; or else he was the victim of a strange mental delusion—an hallucination of which he had never before had the slightest symptoms. How could he persuade himself that the young girl sitting there—a palpable, blushing, breathing presence—was only a chimera of his own brain?

"If I might touch her—even the folds of her dress!" he murmured—but some power withheld him—the fear of startling her, perhaps banishing her to return no more.

He might, of course, have called in the housekeeper, to sit in his room, during the morning, and decide by her testimony whether there was or was not a third person in the room; but to this he had two objections—the first that he respected the shrinking delicacy of his sitter, and the other, that if he were thus deceived and mentally astray, he was too proud to allow another a knowledge of his weakness.

Like many other scholars, whose active minds reach out in every direction, Paul Pennon had read a great many medical books, and of course had made anatomy a study in the course of his profession as figure-painter. He was not unaware that hallucinations, more remarkable than this, had occurred, and that they were generally symptoms of insanity. But there was no insanity hereditary in his family, and he was at that time in excellent health, not feverish, and with no symptoms of cerebral excitement. Others may have been victims of mental aberrations—but he was *not*—he was convinced of that.

He felt his pulse, looked at his tongue in the mirror, questioned his mind coolly, and was convinced. His only trouble was in fixing upon some reasonable motives for the actions of the young girl. He had left her with her parents, on her way home, awaiting a sufficient convalescence to enable her to resume the journey. What should have caused her to desert them and follow him?—where she kept herself when away from him?—her object in coming to him in this manner?—all these questions forced themselves upon his mind, to be driven back unanswered by the might of his love and the sweetness of his content in the present. For, after the morning sitting, although he could paint no more after she left the room, yet he felt peaceful and happy, spending the rest of the day in the gardens or on the river, and the evening in reading and pleasant musing.

The day before the picture was finished, a thought had occurred to him which had made him very uneasy—the idea that Clematis might have been seized with brain-fever and wandered away from friends in a state of partial insanity. If so, what danger must she not be in, and from what terrible suspense must they be suffering!

He scrutinized her closely when she came for the last time. There was no appearance of fever or unnatural excitement; she was calm, gentle, her eyes serene, and her cheeks just tinted with the roses of health.

## CHAPTER XII.

### A PHANTOM BRIDE.

As we have said before, there soon came a day when the picture was finished. When that last touch was given which renders all further touches desecration, Pennon looked up with a yearning, regretful look into the eyes of Clematis. She saw from his expression that the portrait was completed, and arose.

"Will you not look at it?" he asked; but she shook her head and glided toward the door; moved by an uncontrollable impulse, he stretched out his hands supplicatingly, but she shook her head again, opened the door and flitted through, pausing a brief instant to give him a farewell glance. He felt that she would return no more, and was resolved to end all this mystery at once, if possible, by following her.

Passing into the hall, he saw her descending the stairs, and pursued her out into the avenue, through the catalpa-grove, the rose-garden, over the lawn, into a thicket of laurels, and from thence into the grotto which formed his boat-house. He was surprised to find her so familiar with all the labyrinths of the grounds. She never once looked around, but glided on with the noiseless step of a spirit. When he reached the grotto, she was just stepping into a little boat which he had never seen before, but which shamed the white, crimson and gold of his own pretty bark. It looked more like a "curved shell of hollow pearl!" than anything else. Without looking behind her, the young girl took up a slender oar, elegantly fashioned and silvered over, with which she paddled out into the broad sunlight of the river. So swift were her motions that Pennon had difficulty in keeping her in sight, while he detached his boat from its moorings, took down a pair of oars, and pushed out into the river. There was hardly wind enough to make the single sail of his boat available, so he left it furled and urged the oars to the bent of his power. He made tremendous



strokes, but with an ease transcending his usual skill, and was soon so close to the fair fugitive that he shouted to her to wait for him. His shouts were unheeded—the pearly boat, with its white-robed occupant, flew along the sparkling river as we dream of the barks of Paradise sailing on the eternal streams. Pennon wondered that the rough men in the river craft, whom they met, did not turn and stare at the beautiful vision which flitted by them; but they hardly cast a glance at the girl, caring more to gaze stupidly at the crimson and gilding of his boat, and the sturdy speed with which he pulled the oars.

Clematis had taken the direction of the island, upon which, not many weeks previous, she had lost her book and necklace. It looked lovelier than ever as they approached it this day. The leaves of the trees, some of them just tinged with the first light frost, fluttered in the tremulous breeze like so many restless birds. The belt of sand upon the shore, lay in the rich atmosphere like a girdle of gold, dropped about the island to protect its beauty. Springing upon the land the moment the keel of her shallop grazed the sand, Clematis turned for the first time, beckoned Pennon to follow her, and took the path to the summer-house. He had an occasional glimpse of her figure amidst the trees, as he hurried after her. When he reached the pagoda, she was standing in the entrance. He now perceived that she had added a wreath of orange-flowers and a veil to her attire. The long, full veil floated about her ethereal form, waved by an almost imperceptible wind.

"I am ready, Paul," she said, speaking for the first time in all the six days she had been with him.

She took his hand and led him into the pagoda. A venerable old man stood by the table, on which was a vase of flowers and a book—a prayer-book open at the marriage ritual. Upon the entrance of the young couple, he began the ceremony, and in a brief time further, Pennon and Clematis were man and wife.

The old man blessed them, as they knelt before him, and vanished.

"Come, my darling, let us go home."

"Yes, let us hasten, before storms arise!" cried the bride.

The two wandered, hand in hand, down to the shore, until they came to where their boats were moored.

"One boat will suffice for both," said Pennon.

"Yes! let us take mine. It is the swiftest, and danger threatens. Do you not see the tempest coming, Paul?"

A shadow had come suddenly between them and the sunshine. For the first time the bridegroom perceived gathering clouds blackening the west, and sending *avant-couriers* scudding along the sky; the silver sparkle of the waves was lost in an ominous leaden hue, and an oppressive stillness, for a short space rested upon all things.

"Yes, dearest, let us hasten," and Pennon sprung by mistake, into his own boat, lifting his bride with him. "Ah! this is my boat. Never mind—we will fly before the wind; let me unfurl the sail."

The sail was spread, and the first light breezes of the coming storm filled it and carried the bark along pleasantly. But soon the wind arose fiercely and the black water dashed over into the boat, wetting the white drapery of the bride. She shivered with the cold.

"Be brave, darling. At this rate we shall reach the castle in fifteen minutes. The tempest will not break before that."

On and on they flew, rapidly as the wind which bore them; fifteen minutes—half an hour—an hour passed, and the castle did not come in sight.

"It is strange!" muttered the bridegroom, beginning to feel deep alarm, as he looked at his pale and silent companion.

"Yes, it is strange. Shall we never reach home, Paul?"

"Have courage—we must soon be there."

The fanciful pennant which flew before the mast was rent in tatters, the sail was close-reefed, and the little vessel labored in the sullen waters; lightning flashed overhead; the sun set and night came on, with darkness which only the bolts of heaven could rend asunder.

"Oh, where is our home?" cried Clematis.

"I know not—but at least we can die together!"

He reached forth in the darkness and gathered her shivering form to his bosom—that moment the vessel struck a rock and was dashed in pieces; the chilly waters rushed over them—they sunk—sunk.

"It's a dreadful mercy, doctor, that he wasn't drowned."

"He was about as near dead as men ever get to be who are fated to try life a little longer."

"I've heard him say he was an excellent sailor, and I don't see how he came to let his boat run ag'in' a snag in broad daylight. If fishermen hadn't been close to hand, he'd never have been rescued."

"Keep him warm, and give him plenty of stimulating drink. I'll call in to-morrow again; he's doing well enough now. How do you feel, Mr. Pennon?"

"Very comfortable, thank you; though I can hardly be certain how I do feel," answered the patient, opening his eyes and looking about him.

"Say, doctor, was she saved?"

"Who?" asked the physician, in surprise.

"My wife—the lady who was in the boat with me."

The doctor and housekeeper exchanged glances, as much as to say he was not in his right mind. "Perhaps he was wounded upon the head by the boat or snag;" and he began to examine the head of the patient beneath the hair.

"No—let me alone, my head is all right. Perhaps I have been dreaming. How came I in this condition and what has happened to me?"

"You were out, alone in your boat, sailing on the river, when you ran into a snag, upset your boat, and you sunk, being either unable to swim, or having received a blow which stunned you. Some fishermen near at hand, dragged you out and brought you home, when your housekeeper summoned me. We had hard work to bring you back to life, Mr. Pennon."

"What day of the week is it, and what hour of the day?"

"It is about six o'clock of Wednesday, P. M."

"Only four hours since I left this house," murmured Pennon—"it was all a hallucination then. Doctor, I want to talk with you to-morrow, when you call."

The next day Pennon and the physician had a long conversation, at nearly the close of which the former exclaimed:

"Confound that tragic necklace! it was that, after all!"

"I am convinced that it was!"

"You think it possible that a poison, once violent enough to produce instant death—then, when weakened by age, paralysis—might, on some constitutions, produce such effects as I have suffered from the past week?"

"I do. It has acted upon you something as opium or *hasheesh* might. Your housekeeper avers that you behaved 'curiously' all the time. Moreover, I must infer, since the young lady of whom you speak was so palpable and persistent a part of your visions, that she had previously been very much in your thoughts"—and the doctor smiled. Pennon smiled also, and his color lightened.

"You are not mistaken," he answered, frankly.

"I should like to see the necklace—it must be a curiosity."

"You shall—and the portrait which I painted, also—that is, if I really painted one. I have not been in my chamber yet; the housekeeper forbade my leaving this room until you gave orders."

"It will do you no harm to stir about a little now. I could hardly tear myself from the house until I knew whether you actually worked during your extraordinary illusion, or only fancied your labors."

The two gentlemen went together to the chamber.

"It seems to me almost as if the perfume of her garments lingered here," murmured Pennon, stepping in, as if the place were sacred.

The chair which the imaginary sitter had occupied stood in its proper place, the easel, which was turned toward the light, the pallet, just as he had hastily set it down, was there, the paints dried on; they advanced eagerly to the front of the canvas.

"Good heavens! I don't think you need to regret being poisoned, if this is the result of it!" exclaimed the doctor.

Pennon stood spellbound before his own supremely beautiful work.

"It is herself," he whispered.

"Then go and ask her to marry you—you can never hope to do better, I tell you. I don't wonder you had visions."

The young man laughed at the staid doctor's enthusiasm; but he was not at all displeased by it.

"The picture would make you famous as a work of art. And then, what a subject! If I was not a married man, and the father of a family, I should start off in search of the original, and try to cut you out."

"I don't know but I shall imitate Praxitiles, and adore my own work."

"Ah, but Praxitiles had no original to adore. That's the difference, my boy. There's a more sensible plan before you."

"And do you think I am to feel no further effects from the scratch of the steel claw, doctor? Hold! I will show you the emeralds."

"I think not, at present," was the answer, while Pennon unlocked a drawer and drew forth a box.

"Your cold bath, and the start your system has received, will shake off all effects, especially if you seek change and travel for a short time. At this time of the year, another season, you may have a slight recurrence of your malady; but you and your friends will understand it, and know how to humor it. Your constitution is excellent, and you will suffer no especial harm."

The physician handled the emeralds as he would have done a serpent from which he wished to extract the fangs.

"They are superb," said he—"quite a treasure. You had better allow me to wrench out this dangerous claw, before some one else is harmed by it."

"I had rather not, until the owners have seen it. I will be careful that no one shall handle it;" and the necklace was replaced.

"I can not persuade myself that all this has not been a reality."

"I have read of more remarkable instances of hallucination," began the doctor, taking a chair where he could look at the portrait at his ease. "Indeed, I have made brain disorders a study. Such illusions as you have labored under, are very common in cases of insanity, when beginning to develop, but are also produced by other causes, as for instance, some kinds of drugs and poisons, whose effects are principally upon the brain. Dr. Arnold relates a very striking case of incipient insanity, where the effects were something similar—not that I think you are insane," he interrupted himself, with a smile, as he saw Pennon flush to the brow; "a very interesting case, indeed, which I am minded to tell you."

"A gentleman, aged thirty-five, active, and in good health, living near London, had for five weeks

complained of a slight headache. He was rather feverish and neglected his avocations and family. He had been cupped and had taken some medicine, when he received a visit from Dr. Arnold, by whose advice he was placed in an asylum, where he passed two years; his delirious fancies lessened by degrees until he was restored to his family, in sane mind. His story is thus told by himself:

"One afternoon in the month of May, feeling a little unwell and indisposed for business, I determined to take a walk in the city to divert myself. Having reached St. Paul's Churchyard, I stopped at the print shop of Carrington to look at some engravings of the cathedral. I had been there but a short time, when an old gentleman, stout, serious looking, and dressed in brown, also stopped to examine them. Our eyes by chance meeting, he commenced a conversation, admired the view from St. Paul's, related several anecdotes of the architect, Sir Christopher Wren, and asked if ever I had been in the dome. On my replying in the negative, and finding that I had not dined, he proposed to repair to a neighboring tavern, and said, that after the repast he would accompany me to St. Paul's; the day, he added, was magnificent for the view, and, as he was familiar with the places, he would point out all the objects of interest."

"After a hasty dinner we mounted to the ball, which is placed immediately under the cross, and we entered it alone. We had been there some minutes admiring the superb panorama before us, when the old gentleman drew from the side pocket of his coat an instrument that resembled a compass and on which some curious figures were engraved; he murmured some unintelligible words, and placed it in the center of the ball."

"I was seized with a violent trembling and a kind of horror, which greatly increased on his offer to show me, if I wished, a distant friend, and, also, what he was at that moment doing. My father had long been ill, and I had not been to see him for some weeks; the sudden wish to see him overcame all my scruples. No sooner had I formed this wish than I saw my father in a mirror; he was reclining in a chair taking his usual nap. As I had somewhat doubted the power of the old gentleman, I was frozen with terror, and, feeling very ill, begged him instantly to descend. He complied; and on parting with him he said: 'Remember you are the slave of the man of the mirror.' I returned home at night, unhappy, restless, and fearful, and full of thoughts of the stranger. For three months I have never ceased to feel his power."

"Dr. Arnold asked the patient in what manner the old man exercised the influence over him. Throwing a suspicious glance on the doctor, he took him by the arm, led him through two or three rooms, and at length into the garden, when he exclaimed: 'It is useless; nothing can hide us from him; every place is open to him; he sees and hears us now.'

"I requested him, said the doctor, to show me the mysterious individual who saw and heard us. He replied, with much agitation: 'Have I not told you that he lives in the ball under the cross of St. Peter's—that he only comes down in the churchyard, and to go and dine in the dark alley? Since that fatal meeting with the necromancer—for I cannot call him by any other name—he constantly attracts me within his mirror, sees me thus at all hours of the day, and reads my most secret thoughts. I have the terrible consciousness that no act of my life escapes his knowledge, and that there is no spot in which I can be hidden from him.'

"To the doctor's observation that the darkness of night ought to protect him against the machinations, he replied: 'I know what you would say, but you are wrong. I have only spoken to you of the mirror, but in a corner of the building the magician showed me a great clock, and I distinctly heard the sounds that came from it, and those that entered; it was a confused medley of laughter, cries of anger, of despair; and as I listened in great terror, he said: 'It is my organ of hearing. This great work has communication with all the clocks that are in the hieroglyphic circle. By this means I hear the words of all those under my supervision.'

"I have not told you all. This necromancer practices his sorceries by means of hieroglyphics on the walls and houses, and he spreads his rod of fire over those whom he has inclosed in his circle of hieroglyphics, and who are the objects of his constant hatred."

"The doctor begged him to explain the characters and how he could interpret them."

"They are," was the reply, "the signs and symbols that you, in your ignorance of their real meaning, have read thus:

*Day and Martin, and Warren's Blacking.*

You are in error. These signs are the cabalistic characters that he traces to intimate the limits of his empire and to prevent the escape of his captives. What fatigues I have undergone to withdraw myself from his terrible influence! I once walked three days and three nights, until I fell, exhausted and breathless, against a wall and slept. On waking I saw the fatal letters, and felt that I was completely in his power."

"Was not that quite equal to your wonderful boat-ride?" queried the doctor as he finished. "M. Calmeil reports the case of a veteran who felt himself every night nailed in a coffin, and carried in men's arms, by a subterranean road, from Charenton to Vincennes, where a funeral sermon was chanted in the chapel of the chateau. The same invisible persons brought him back and placed him on his bed. M. Thisphile Gontier tells a highly interesting story of the effects of *hasheesh* on himself:

"One of my companions," says this writer, "was the first to yield to its effects, having taken a larger



dose than the others: he saw the stars in his plate, and the firmament in his soup-dish; then turning his face to the wall, talked to himself, bursting into fits of laughter. I felt perfectly calm until dinner was over, although the pupils of the eyes of my other friend began to sparkle strangely and acquire a most singular turquoise-blue tint. The table being cleared, I (still having my senses) arranged myself comfortably with cushions on a divan to await the ecstasy. In a few minutes a general lethargy overcame me. My body appeared to dissolve and become transparent. I saw the *hasheesh*, which I had eaten, distinctly within me, in the form of an emerald, from which thousands of little sparks were emitted; my eyelashes lengthened indefinitely, twisting themselves like golden threads round little ivory wheels, which whirled about with inconceivable rapidity. Around me were figures and scrolls of all colors, arabesques, and flowery forms in endless variety, which I can only liken to the variations of a kaleidoscope.

"I do not see," continued the doctor, "why poison might not produce such, and various other effects."

"All of this reminds me," said Pennon, when the doctor had finished his narrative, "of an incident which occurred to myself, in connection with this very necklace. But as it was before I had been inoculated with its poison, and when I was in an exceedingly vigorous frame of body and mind, I can not account for it upon any of the theories which you have advanced to-day."

"Relate it—relate it, please," said the doctor, giving his chair a twitch, and looking interested and excited. He was investigating one of his favorite branches of study, and any thing which gave him a harder nut to crack than usual, was valuable to him. He had been profoundly pleased and interested by the case of his young patient, and was all curiosity to learn as much of him as possible.

"You must be told," began Pennon, "that I commenced my acquaintance with the lady I have been speaking of, at the very hour and moment when she drew these emeralds from the well where her mother had cast them eighteen years before. I was traveling through the rural districts on a sketching tour, when I paused before her home, attracted by the quaintness of the house and the beauty of its surroundings. I assisted the young lady to carry in the bucket of water which had been the means of her finding the emeralds; and was hospitably treated by the household into which I had intruded myself. The mother had expressed sorrow and terror at the sight of the necklace, but the daughter had laughed at her 'superstition,' as we both deemed it, and avowed her purpose of wearing the jewels whenever she chose. That night I was given a well-furnished but old-fashioned chamber, whose high-post and curtained bed was an impersonation of the past. Every thing to me was charming and novel. I went to bed by moonlight, and fell into the first light slumber dreaming, very probably, of the lovely face of my new acquaintance, but totally forgetful of any magic connected with the necklace, and indeed, oblivious of the necklace itself. As we can feel a person in the darkness, who approaches us, before they are near enough to touch us; or as we open our eyelids when regarded steadily, while sleeping, so I was aroused from my slumber, and made conscious of a presence in my apartment. The moon was shining with peculiar brightness, and I saw distinctly, standing in the center of the room, an old lady, dressed in the costume of fifty or eighty years ago, puffs, powder, gored skirt, short bodice. I looked at her calmly and without fear; my heart scarcely beat a thrill louder or faster. Presently she began to speak, in a high, tremulous key, that vibrated through the chamber with a power which might have rendered it audible in other rooms. I cannot now recall her precise words, but I remember well their meaning. She asked me why I had mingled my destiny with that of the Percys—spoke of my fate as being now irrevocably blent with theirs, and of the misfortunes sure to attend the finding, wearing, or ownership of the necklace—ending by declaring in a very weird and majestic way that the destiny she had invoked was immutable. Then she glided out of the room—I could even hear the falling of the door-latch after her. Now, I put it to your conscience, doctor, if this occurrence was not singular. I am certain that I was perfectly well, free from fever, nightmare or excitement of any kind. I was a stranger in the house. There was no old lady an inmate of the house; and if there had been she would not have been dressed in that rich and ancient costume. I could distinguish the figures in the pattern of her brocaded silk."

"Well, I don't know," cogitated the doctor; "you're sure you've not been subject to any thing of the kind—mental disorder, I mean? Your high-strung, poetic temperaments are frequently overstrung."

"But I have been remarkably free from nervous diseases—you see what a physique I have!" and Pennon threw back his shoulders and expanded his broad chest.

"I must 'make a note of it'—perhaps I can explain it by the time I see you again," said the physician, taking out pencil and note-book.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### A LETTER AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

THE morning following upon this interview with the doctor, the chore boy brought Pennon a letter, who was expecting no message, because he had not left his address with any of his friends. He recognized the dainty chirography with some surprise, some vexation.

"I thought Rosalie was cured of her folly," was

the flattering comment, made entirely to himself, with which he broke the seal.

The letter gave him a different opinion of Miss Rosalie Sloane from that which he entertained when he commenced its perusal. It ran thus:

"FRIEND PAUL: It has always been a mystery to me why sensible men like to make fools of themselves. You have disappointed me terribly. The morning of your selfish and ungallant flight, I had as sweet a confession to bear to you as your fondest dream could anticipate. Think not that Rosalie Sloane was about to throw herself at your feet. If she ever had a weakness like that, she has recovered from it, and is none the worse for it.

"But I had shared the room of an innocent babe, pure and undefiled, 'unskilled in all the arts that worldlings prize,' and I won her gentle confidence. She told me, with such shy blushes, the reason why she had once refused the hand of the man she loved best in the world—that it was because she thought an infirmity, which unfitted her to be the wife of so proud and sensitive a person, was fixed hopelessly upon her—and now that infirmity was removed, she hesitated to manifest a retraction of her refusal, lest, in the meantime, he had grown indifferent to her—timid thing! I made her happy by assuring her that man still loved her—her only upon earth; that his passion, instead of being exterminated, was like chamomile, and throve the more, the more it was trampled upon. Having convinced her of this sweet truth (as I deemed it), I took an æsthetic pleasure in her emotions.

"She wept with pity and delight,  
She blushed with love and virgin shame,  
And, like the murmur of a dream,  
I heard her breathe (thy) name

"She half-inclosed me with her arms.  
She press'd me with a meek embrace,  
And bending back her head looked up  
And smiled into my face."

"So, having medicined her to the sweetest sleep she had ever had, I lay awake nearly all night, thinking of the pretty and delicate way in which I should approach the morose lover with the glad tidings.

"When morning came, I found he had taken to an ignominious flight. For a time I was so bitterly provoked and disappointed that I resolved never to break the network of error in which he had purposely involved himself.

"But the sight of a wan, sad face, a pair of pitiful eyes, which tried to smile their loving farewell at me when the omnibus moved off for the cars, with a certain party among its passengers, moved me to break my iron resolution.

"Noyse thought you were in New York, but I knew better. I have read your selfish nature, and I know you are rustivating this moment, enjoying all the splendor and beauty of your castle in solitude, not only unmindful of friends, but of a heart that is breaking itself most uselessly. Well! if somebody dies, I know what her epitaph ought to be; but I believe she has too much good sense to die for so inadequate a cause. However, she is not of the strongest make—she is fine clay, easily shattered. We are going home soon. I shall not say whether we are well and happy, or not, for you do not care, and do not deserve to know. The Percys are at home by this time.

Yours, in high dudgeon,  
ROSALIE SLOANE."

A word to the wise is sufficient—sometimes.

Five days after the receipt of the communication which set Pennon to packing his trunk so unexpectedly, and which caused the poor housekeeper to say to the chore-boy: "It's plain to be seen, we'll have little peace of our lives with a master that never knows his own mind, and is here one day and away another and back the next"—five days after this, about half an hour before sunset (to be explicit), Clematis Percy, looking fragile and wan, leaned back in the arm-chair her mother had drawn to the window for her, and looked out upon the landscape. It was the window at which their guest had painted the picture now hanging over the mantle—and she gazed at it now more than ever; for she was an invalid, and had not much else to do.

Her parents glanced in at her from the dining-room, where Mrs. Percy was laying the cloth for tea. "It is the emerald necklace which has done it all," said the mother.

"Fiddlestick, wife! it's that confounded painter of pictures!"

It was seldom Mr. Percy used strong language; but his feelings were by no means enviable as he saw the "sole daughter of his house and heart" drooping daily before his eyes.

It was well that the lady of the house had set the table so neatly, and placed on it "good store of all that's nice"—for even as the father spoke so gruffly the latch of the gate clicked, and Clematis started from her musings, to hear a voice at the door, and "footsteps in the passage," which sent the blood rushing to her wan face.

Even before the tea was served Pennon had told his story straightly, and asked the parents for the hand of their darling.

"It will be hard parting from our only one," mourned the father.

"But it will be best for her—can you not see it will, husband?" and the mother looked at the rich light in her daughter's eyes, and forgot her now threatened loneliness.

"I will give you a portrait so like her that you will scarcely know the difference," and the young man laughed in the exceeding lightness of his heart. "I have some curious things to tell you about that portrait—and about your necklace, too. Not now, for the tea is waiting."

That evening, he told to an interested trio of listeners, of the secret cause of the fatality of the necklace, of the wound he had received, and of its singular consequences. He produced the emeralds, and showed to them the steel claw whose fangs had been death to the fair and young, years and centuries ago.

"Let me take these gems to the city with me and have a new setting made for them. They will then be as harmless as the most prosaic of precious stones."

"If you are really convinced, Mr. Pennon, that the emeralds themselves are safely to be worn, I will give them to Clematis as part of her *trousseau*."

"Don't blush, Clematis, at that word," whispered her lover. "The truth is, we are already married, according to the vision. It will not seem so very strange when I really call you wife."

"I shall never rest," said Mrs. Percy, "until I see that lion's claw consumed in the fire to which it is destined."

"We've just enough fire in the grate for the purpose," said Clematis.

"Nay," replied Pennon, "it must remain as it is, until our wedding-day. We will celebrate that happy time by exorcising forever the evil genius of the necklace."

### CHAPTER XIV.

#### A BRIEF RECORD.

ROSALIE SLOANE is at home. Not many people have returned to the city yet from their summer resorts; but the beautiful belle is preparing for her wedding, and is glad to have her time so much to herself. She keeps two dressmakers and three or four embroiderers and sewing-girls engaged, and is very happy amid laces, and silks, and robes, and new patterns, and the beautiful presents which come to her almost every day from some of her many friends. She is very happy, and far lovelier than ever. It can not be the excitement of the new things and the anticipation of the coming gay season, during which she will reign as a bride alone, which keeps her eye so moist and bright and her cheek charming with its changing tints.

Pennon, too, has grown radiant; stays in the city, and goes to visit her very often.

"What happiness do I not owe to you?" he murmurs almost every day, as he presses her delicate hand; and she smiles an answer out of her dark-blue eyes.

In the mean time, what has become of Noyse? He, too, is in the city. He has gone to practicing law with his uncle. He studies night and day, almost, and works with a will and purpose to succeed. He seems trying to banish some constant, preying thought. He would be restless, uneasy, forgetful, absurd, if he did not compel himself to this industry. Then, also, he has determined to be a rich man, if perseverance and talent can make him so. Perhaps in this he hopes for some future revenge.

Pennon has had a confidential interview with Mrs. Butterby, in which he has informed her that he shall want her best front parlor and bedroom after the eighteenth of October, and that he will furnish them himself, at which she is delighted and promises to keep his secret.

Mrs. Fenelon is in her element. If there has been a care upon her mind since her own husband was secured, it has been that her darling sister was yet unprovided for. She has held up her pretty hands many times in horror at the carelessness with which Rosalie dismissed her suitors. But now there is really a wedding on hand.

Rosalie is not exempt from a passion for these things, likewise; but a deeper passion, a pure emotion has been awakened in her nature, never to sleep again, and as she dreams glowing dreams of the future, and her heart swells with a new, strange happiness, she is not sorry to allow her sister to assume the responsibility of the *trousseau*.

### CHAPTER XV.

#### EXPECTATION.

IT was one of the most gorgeous of autumn days, about a week before the eighteenth of October, that a carriage paused before the little avenue leading up to the stone cottage, and a lady with an incredible amount of baggage was landed from it.

"What a sweet, rustic, delicious place," murmured Miss Sloane, for it was she. "Pennon said truly that it was a secluded Eden—and it holds an Eve that never sinned."

"Oh fairest of the rural maids!" as Bryant says, I seek you in the midst of befitting beauty," she cried, as Clematis came to meet her.

Both the girls laughed and blushed as they kissed each other, as if they had been lovers.

"You promised to be my bridemaid, and it seems that I am to be yours," said Clematis.

"And I am so happy—are not you dearest?"

"Oh, very! but it seems so strange—I cannot realize it."

"Nor I, either. I hardly dare think of it."

"Who would have dreamed it, the first time we saw each other?"

"Ah, who would?"

"Come in and see mother. I will send Peter to bring in the baggage and then we will have lunch; and then we can talk over what we have to do, while you lie down and rest."

"Oh, I'm neither tired nor hungry. After I have spoken with your beloved mamma, I should love to walk through the meadow and sit under that flaming maple-tree that I see glowing like the burning bush between us and the hills."

"You are as romantic as I am," laughed Clematis.

"I did not think it."

"Indeed I used, when I was a child, to be a real sentimentalist. I am getting back my old tastes



though. I would give my best dress or my diamond ring to be the fresh, enthusiastic creature that you are."

"Do you feel so very old, Rosalie? Let me see, you are twenty or thereabouts, are you not?"

"It was not the years, it was the manner of life which I was regretting. One could stay young forever in a place like this. That rustic well-sweep looks as if it dipped into the fountain of perpetual youth. By the way, Pennon wrote some verses about that, did he not?"

Again the silvery laugh of the fair girls rung on the air.

"There is mamma waiting for us at the door."

They hastened toward the house.

"Welcome, my dear Miss Sloane."

As Mrs. Percy kissed the young traveler's cheek, speaking in her soft voice, and looking more welcome than she said, as she untied the bonnet-strings and removed the cape, Rosalie wished that she had such a mother.

"I have not had a mother since I was a little child, Mrs. Percy," she said, "which is the reason I have so many faults, I expect. Will you not adopt me?"

"I will adopt you and take suitable care of you until some one else substitutes their right."

"Ah, well; that will be soon enough," and the beautiful girl sighed, and Clematis caught its echo and sighed too.

The tray of refreshments which were brought into the parlor looked so nice that Miss Sloane found she was a trifle hungry, after all; so she ate a little lunch, talked a little longer with her hostess, took up her bonnet, and—

"Now for the maple tree, Clematis."

With arms about each other's waists, they wandered forth. Mrs. Percy looked after them lovingly and admiringly, brushing a tear from her lids and seeming sad for an instant as she turned away.

"Willis says, 'Give me a seat on a sofa,' but if this is not more luxurious than velvet and steel springs, then I have no perception of luxury," said Rosalie, as she flung herself onto the fine crisp grass and golden moss beneath the maple.

"And what a canopy we have—better than the crimson silk which used to flaunt over kings and queens."

"More splendid than the embroideries of the old English courts," responded the city belle, as she leaned against the gnarled trunk and looked up into the fluttering foliage above her.

"How gently it whispers to us. The tree loves you, Rosalie, for it has dropped one, two, three of its brightest leaves into your hair, as if to crown you. You told me in your last letter, I believe, that your dress was of white *moire antique*, and that you had ordered mine to be just like yours. Of course you have an elegant veil, and dainty orange flowers and camellias, fashioned by the fingers of some little French girl. Now I propose that we weave us wreaths of these brilliant leaves, and crown ourselves with these instead."

"What would sister Bertha say to that?" and Rosalie laughed at the picture her fancy drew of Mrs. Fenelon's consternation to find her care and exquisite coiffure exchanged for such a garland.

"They are not appropriate to a wedding, since it is the touch of death that gives them their glow; but if it was not for that I should certainly choose them," continued Clematis. "However, I have two or three white roses in full bloom now, and we shall not lack for the pure real flowers."

"Have you no gardens or conservatories near? Bertha will be in despair."

"No, but I have some beautiful plants in my little study. There is a japonica budded, besides the roses, and geraniums in abundance. We shall have flowers."

"I am so glad that I am going to be married here; I shall escape the formalities of a town wedding. I shall realize my new hopes and my new happiness more."

"How wonderful it all is!" murmured her companion.

They grew silent, each absorbed in her own musings, until the tinkle of a bell called them to tea.

In the evening Clematis took her visitor through all the rooms of the house which were to be open to company. The arrangements were simple and tasteful, in character with the size of the mansion and the fashions of its people.

"This will be your room after you are mar—"

"Hush!"

"Why, Rosa, I could not help mentioning it, could I? Is it not a queer, quaint old chamber? Here is where Pennon slept the first night he came to our house. This week you will room with me; but let us sit here a moment by the window—the night is so lovely."

"It is indeed a quaint room; very suggestive of ghosts and old legends."

Clematis laughed merrily.

"Your speaking of ghosts reminds me that Pennon saw one that first night he staid in it."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, he told me. Besides, I knew it before."

"What kind of a ghost was it—young and pretty?"

"No, old and wrinkled. You have heard us speak of my emerald necklace, and all the strange stories attached to it. Pennon has told you how he found me at the well just as I found the necklace in it. The dismay which mother showed when I came in with it, set me to thinking of all the stories she had from time to time excited my fancy with; and you may be sure that when I went to my room that night I did not go to bed without first pondering long over the precious emeralds. I was very glad I had found it; it was quite too beautiful to hide its purest ray serene in the dark, unfathomed caves"

of an old well; and as I was not the least bit credulous I smiled at the legends which my dear mother was wont to connect with it. It put an idea into my head, which I was just mischievous enough (I was full of the spirit of mischief then)—"

"And have changed a great deal in four months, I suppose."

"Just wild enough to carry into effect. I do not know now how I dared to do it. I have no intention of confessing to Pennon unless he questions me about it. In the bureau of my room there is a drawer full of my grandmother's old-fashioned finery—her wedding-suit, I believe."

"That's fine. You will show them to me."

"I got out the dress, the belt, the emerald clasp, the puffed hair, the high-heeled shoes, and put them on; drew a few wrinkles in my face with a bit of India ink, and practiced my voice awhile at a high and querulous, but not loud pitch. I think I should have passed for the spirit of my ancestor—at least, that was what I intended."

"Did you really venture into the young gentleman's room?"

"I did. It was very audacious for me. But I peeped through the key-hole and saw that his light was extinguished; and I could hear by his regular breathing that he was asleep. I knew that if he were frightened, or attempted to rise, that one bound would take me out of the chamber, and that I could escape to my room before he detected me. Stealing softly in I began the speech which I had studied—I forget the words now—but they connected him with the family destiny and the emerald necklace."

"Very easy to prophesy, and then set deliberately to work to bring about what you have foretold," jeered Rosalie.

"Oh, but in sober truth I had not a serious thought of such a thing. I supposed the young gentleman would leave us and our fortunes upon the morrow, never to think of us again."

"Wished that he would, too, I make no doubt! How did he take the intrusion of so wonderful an apparition?"

"Very coolly. Quite too deliberately to please me. He was neither frightened nor exasperated, but looked at me so calmly through the moonlight that it was I who grew alarmed for fear that he recognized me, and was laughing silently at my expense."

"He did not recognize you. He has told me about 'the ghost,' as he called it, and confessed that it has puzzled him in thinking about it. He never thought of you."

"Because he could not think I would do such a thing. Oh, I never mean to tell him, unless he asks."

"You see how dangerous it is to prophesy even in sport," said Rosalie, with mock gravity; "for your idle jest came true in some very serious ways."

"I can never regret it," murmured the young girl.

"What if that lightning had killed you?"

"But it did not; and if ever there was any evil in the emeralds I have faith to believe it is now exorcised. I have had my share of the ills they bequeath. What a singular accident that Pennon should have found them when I lost them on the island!"

"And what a pang of pain it gave me when I saw him walking about the garden holding them in his hand."

"Did you see him doing that, dear Rosalie? But why did it give you pain?"

"Never mind now, darling, since it is all over, now and forever. I had not been behaving well then, you see. I was foolish and vain, and wanted to conquer every one—even the unconquerable Pennon."

"Unconquerable," mused Clematis, "yet so easily conquered."

"Not so very easily, my dear. It took a great many gifts of mind, heart and person to vanquish him at last."

"It is not strange," spoke Clematis, after a moment's silence, "that the only two offers I ever had should both occur upon the day that I was most stricken? Shall I take it as a proof of the power and unselfishness of true love?"

"Yes, or for the love men have for doing all the talking themselves. No doubt both of them thought a quiet wife would be a great blessing."

"Why, Rosalie, what a girl! I should not wonder, though, if that last supposition was true of one of them. Poor Julien! I must smile when I think of his chagrin and ill-temper. He went off that same afternoon, first twitting me of being in love with a low adventurer. I guess he had an eye upon my very modest little fortune, but I am not sure."

"If one were to feel grieved over all the lovers she discards, she would have but a melancholy life of it," said the proud and adored belle Rosalie, as she shook back her golden hair.

It was very late that night when the girls sunk to sleep, for the trunks had been carried up-stairs, and there was the whole bridal paraphernalia to be looked at and discussed. After such a delighted and exciting occupation, it was surprising that they slumbered at all.

#### CHAPTER XVI.

##### THE NECKLACE IS EXORCISED.

THERE were two weddings upon the eighteenth of October; and if there were, in any Eden of the world, a happier bridegroom than Paul Pennon, that other happier one was Noyse.

The pride and tenderness which dwelt in Rosalie's eyes as she looked at him with a new and sweet timidity—the thought of that superb beauty having yielded to him her heart at last, was joy enough to blot out all memory of the bitter cup he had tasted.

The ceremonies took place on a golden afternoon

and the festivities were continued late into the evening. Julien Percy was one of the guests, though not a very brilliant one.

Clematis was alone in her chamber. There was still a "sound of revelry" in the parlor; some one was playing the piano, and conversation was going merrily on. She heard all this distinctly as she stood in her bridal chamber. Two or three of the ladies had stolen away with her to offer their services, but she had dismissed them and was serving herself. The bridal veil was removed from her hair, the flowers from her bosom, and now she stood motionless, her head drooped, her hands listless, while a crowd of emotions and memories rushed over her. Suddenly she became conscious of a strange presence; the light flared and flickered, and a dim, ghostly luster, neither that of moon or star, filled the chamber. She felt irresistibly impelled to turn and gaze upon the spirit which she felt was near her, yet her body refused to obey.

"Clematis Percy Pennon, heiress of our line and inheritress of our misfortunes, didst thou hope to escape the destiny irrevocably fixed upon every bride who, as heiress of her father's house, has worn the emerald necklace?" asked a thin and dreary voice, yet sweet and sad withal, whose solemn accents, low as they were, filled every nook with painful distinctness. "Look upon those whose successor thou art!"

Half paralyzed as she was with terror, Clematis made a mighty effort to burst the fear that was binding her, and confronted the speaker. Not one, but four misty white phantoms hovered midway between her and the door of the chamber.

"That is indeed the fatal number," she whispered, as the chill of dread crept around her heart.

"Ah! and thou shalt make the fifth. Would'st know thy fate in time to prepare thyself for it?"

"Any fate that does not part me from the one I love!" she cried in sudden anguish, as the thought of the probability of a separation from her husband smote her heart.

"Thy fate, then, is—" began the melancholy voice—

"To be the most worshiped, the most adored of women!" interrupted the clear, soft voice of Pennon at the door.

"Mercy!" shrieked the spirits, flitting in every direction; and the sound of mocking laughter and merry gibes sent the blood glowing through the bosom that had been so chilled.

After a wedding is there ever any thing more to be told? Not if one would end a story with an artistic climax. Very ineffective it is to come fluttering in with the small banners and tag end of the procession, after the grand ceremony is over, the great act of the spectacle performed. Yet we had curiosity enough to keep our eyes for awhile upon the new-married couples. We wished to know whether the earnest resolves to live more for others than herself, to be content with a man not magnificently rich, to find her purest happiness in the love which she felt herself capable of entertaining for her husband, lasted any length of time with the beautiful belle, once the veriest butterfly of fashion.

We are happy to announce that "practice makes perfect,"—that the charms of her soul and mind are equal to her person and manner—that she grows more truly lovable day by day—that the last thing the proud and contented Noyse thinks of is to regret the time when he pardoned the fair belle for her transient falsity to him.

Pennon is more of an artist, poet and enthusiast than ever, for the presence of Clematis is like an inspiration to him. He almost thinks it is she who paints pictures and writes rhymes, so does she sympathize with his tastes and give life to his dreams.

When the wedding-party went from the stone cottage, the second day of their marriage, they concluded to pay a flying visit to the castle, as Pennon was anxious to show its beauty to Clematis.

Rosalie, for a moment, was loth to return to the scene of her ill conduct, but she overcame the feeling bravely, and became secretly anxious to test the strength of her purposes by recalling the temptations of that luxurious home.

They found the castle a most charming place to dream away the honeymoon; and there they lingered until the cold winds of November warned them home. They visited the island and held another picnic there, and enjoyed every delightful day wandering about the grounds.

"Do you regret the necessity of parting with this place?" asked Pennon of his bride one day.

"I should be glad if you were able to keep it, as it was a bequest. I do not regret its splendor so much. The old stone cottage in the little valley will always be a sweet place for us to spend our summers in, don't you think so?"

"Ay, very sweet to me, dear Clematis; for it was there that I found you, my pearl, my star, my wild-wood flower."

"What a habit you have of calling me names," laughed the happy young wife.

Pennon, when he left upon his artistic excursion, had promised Mrs. Butterby a story when he should return in November. He had not the smallest idea how that story would terminate—that it would wind up in stereotyped fashion with a wedding—but it ended even so, and this that has been told you is the identical tale that he related to her one evening about the first of December, illustrating some of its most striking passages with the loving picture of his beautiful bride, who nestled by his side while he narrated it.

"Dear suz!" remarked that good woman, "I never thought none of my boarders would have a true story happen to 'em."

THE END.



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